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Spring calling

A biodynamic garden in the city

by Arne Maynard

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Editor's letter

What is so covetable about a tulip? The bulb that historically sent men mad; it is still listed by many as their favourite flower. Simplicity of form, intensity colour and an early appearance are perhaps part of its appeal. For me, it is also that it waits underground; bud, shoot and leaves fully formed in miniature pushing up only when the conditions are right.

In this issue we visit a small, London garden designed by Arne Maynard where brilliant tulips jostle with well-clipped topiary, fruit trees and biodynamically grown vegetables. The tulip cultivars have been selected to flower consecutively from late March until the start of May. Joshua Sparkes, head gardener at Forde Abbey highlights his favourite tulip combinations honed by the four years he spent as a gardener at Sissinghurst Castle under Troy Scott Smith, and in Padua, Italy we visit a garden where the tulips are grown among meadows of wildflowers.

Pot-et-fleur is a beautiful and thrifty way of arranging cut flowers that first found fashion in the Victorian era. It allows a single arrangement to be re-used, with cut stems in combination with houseplants, and spent flowers regularly replaced by fresh. Jacky Mills reconsiders the idea from a contemporary standpoint, creating three arrangements inspired by, for example, a walk down a local country lane. All have been created without the environmental impact of using floral foam.

Concrete has had a bad press in recent years, yet taking a cue from Peter Zumthor's RIBA award-winning 'rammed' concrete house in south Devon, designer Andy Sturgeon considers its usefulness and incredible beauty. A versatile material that endures, when well used is a sublime backdrop to modern planting.

Look out this month for a new special edition from *Gardens Illustrated – A Year in the Edible Garden*. This month-by-month guide to delicious things to grow to eat, includes Jekka McVicar's essential culinary herbs, the most flavourful vegetable cultivars from Great Dixter and the best new kit for gardener cooks. I'm sure it will become a valuable addition to your gardening toolkit.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR

Rediscover the lost art of pot-et-fleur with three fresh ideas for flower displays, page 82.

JASON INGRAM

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JASON INGRAM

Colourful tulips enrich the historic gardens at Forde Abbey, page 70.

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London garden, by Richard Bloom

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EVENTS AND OFFERS

- *Gardens Illustrated* subscribers get free UK p&p when they order the new *A Year in the Edible Garden* special edition – page 11
- Don't miss our sneak peek of the plants destined for Tom Massey's organic garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show – page 12
- Join us on a four-day tour of the South West's most exciting kitchen gardens – page 14
- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 30
- Win free entry for two to the world-famous Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew† – page 122
- Save 10% with free p&p on plant orders at Sarah Raven† – page 125

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Contributors

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Aaron Bertelsen
Aaron begins a new series on growing and cooking fruit and vegetables, page 38. *"Everyone can grow something, no matter how large or small a space they have for a kitchen garden."*

Richard Wilford
Richard chooses the best fritillaries for a spring garden, page 52. *"The crown imperials dazzle but I love the more subtle and delicate fritillaries that quietly grace the spring garden."*

Jacky Mills
Jacky shows how to combine cut flowers with houseplants, page 82. *"I love using wildflowers in naturalistic, floral arrangements and grow as many as possible in my own garden."*

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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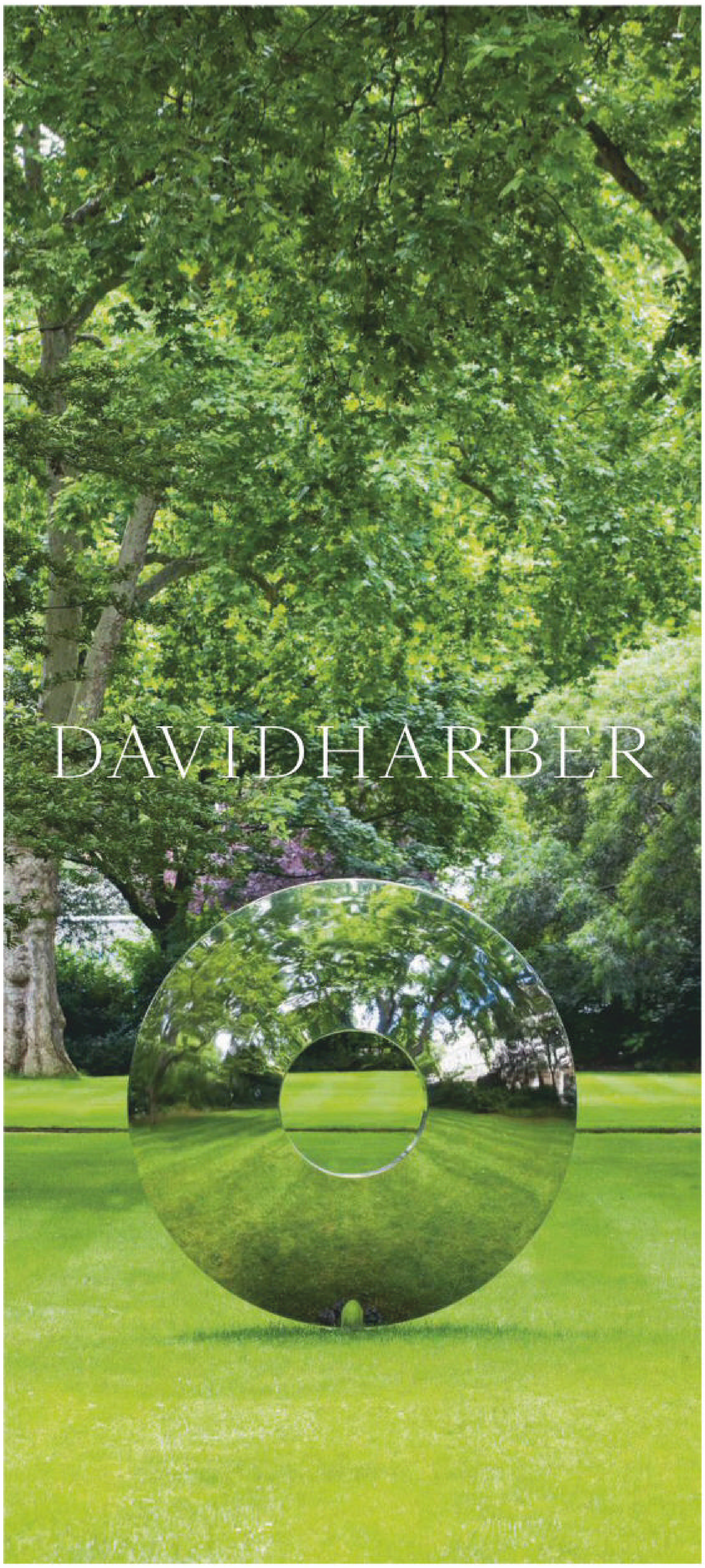

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Guest Speaker
Alan Mason

Alan is a founder member of The Professional Gardener's Guild and the founder of Senior Garden Advisors consultancy group. Alan started his garden design consultancy business in 1987 following a period where he was the youngest Head Gardener in the country, at Bramham Park and Garden Manager to the Queen's cousin Lord Harewood at Harewood House in Yorkshire. Here, he and his team elevated the gardens into the top ten most visited gardens in the country. During the 80's and 90's he presented television programmes from around Europe, including "Le Manoir" the making of his own garden in Brittany and the long running "Gardens without Borders". Alan is also a judge of the show gardens at the prestigious Sandringham Flower Show and a garden design lecturer for The Royal Horticultural Society.

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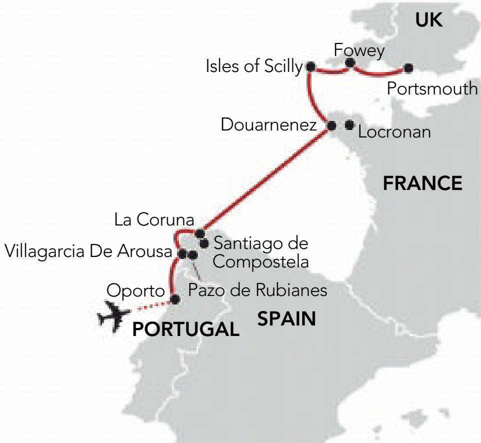

The Itinerary in Brief

Day 1 London to Oporto, Portugal. Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive and transfer to the MS Caledonian Sky moored in Leixoes.

Day 2 Oporto. Transfer this morning to the waterfront in Oporto and embark our awaiting vessel for an exclusive cruise up the breathtaking Douro Valley, passing through two of the river system's huge locks and enjoying views of peaceful villages and terraced hillsides as we make our way upstream. Lunch will be served on board prior to our arrival in the town of Regua in the early afternoon. Disembark here and enjoy a tasting session at the Quinta da Pacheca, a wine estate offering fabulous views of the surrounding countryside that was established in the town in 1738. Return to the MS Caledonian Sky by coach in time for an early evening sail.

Day 3 Villagarcia De Arousa, Spain. Arriving in Galicia we spend a relaxing morning in the port of Villagarcia De Arousa where we can explore ashore at leisure. After lunch on board, visit the nearby Pazo de Rubianes, originally founded in 1411 and one of the three official lordships in Spain. Enjoy a guided walk through the stunning gardens, famous for their thousands of camellias but also home to eucalyptus trees, sequoias and camphors. Also visit the Pazo's extensive vineyards and learn about the local Albarino wine production, before exploring the historical palace itself. Enjoy a wine tasting before returning to the ship.

Day 4 Santiago de Compostela. From our berth in La Coruna we will make our way to Santiago de Compostela, the capital of the autonomous community of Galicia. The city's cathedral is the destination of the important Medieval pilgrimage route, the Way of St James (in Spanish the 'Camino de Santiago'), which is still walked today. For those keen to walk some of the route there will be the chance to hike a short, steepish section towards Santiago. Otherwise transfer directly to the site where we will visit the Conventual de San Francisco, the Faculty of Medicine and the world-famous Plaza del Obradoiro. Inside the cathedral, we will visit the Romanic crypt and see the facade of Platerias; the Quintana Plaza; House of Parra; facade of Azabachería; and the facade of San Martin Pinario. Enjoy lunch at a Parador and some free time before returning to the ship this afternoon and sailing.

Day 5 At Sea. After a busy few days take the chance to relax as we spend the day at sea. Our lecture programme continues in the lounge or find a spot on deck to relax.

Day 6 Douarnenez, France. This morning we anchor off the Finistere region of France and the port of Douarnenez which prospered as a major centre for the sardine industry in the 19th century. Traces of these days still show in the architecture and the old fisherman's houses that line the harbour, whilst at the Port Musee you may find a number of traditional boats at anchor. Using the ship's Zodiacs to get ashore, we have planned a morning visit to Locronan, one of the most picturesque and preserved Medieval Breton villages which grew from the manufacture of sailcloth. Visit the 15th century church, remarkable for its stone vaulting and stained-glass windows, before walking through the craft workshops. You might also be tempted to taste the famous "kouignamann", a traditional Breton butter cake. Return to the MS Caledonian Sky for lunch and this afternoon will be at leisure to relax on board or to explore this lovely town at your own pace. Please note that the ship's Zodiacs may be used to transfer guests ashore today.

Day 7 Isles of Scilly, UK. Using local boats, we alight on to the traffic-free island of Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous sub-tropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander at your own pace along the paths, maybe visit the Valhalla collection of ship figureheads from ships wrecked on the islands or relax in the café. After lunch on board we use the local boats to sail over to St Agnes, the most south westerly community in the United Kingdom. Surrounded by rocks and reefs, this delightful tiny island offers marvellous coastal walks with over one third designated as "sites of special scientific interest". The small island of Gugh lies across a narrow sandbar and here we find a single stone monolith called the 'Old Man of Gugh' which dates back to the Bronze Age.

Day 8 Fowey. Today the MS Caledonian Sky will anchor in the River Fowey from where we visit the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The seat of the Tremayne family for 400 years, the garden fell into disrepair after World War I and was lovingly restored between 1990 and 2000. Its pre 1920 camellias and rhododendrons, which we hope will be in bloom for our call, are now part of the National Collection and provide a living link to the past. The extensive grounds include a Victorian Kitchen Garden and atmospheric paths lead through the Pleasure Grounds. Medieval and Georgian buildings characterise the picturesque port of Fowey and the afternoon will be at leisure to wander its historic alleys and lanes.

Day 9 Portsmouth. Be on deck early this morning as we sail into the historic naval port of Portsmouth where we disembark. Transfers will be provided to Portsmouth Harbour Railway Station at a fixed time.

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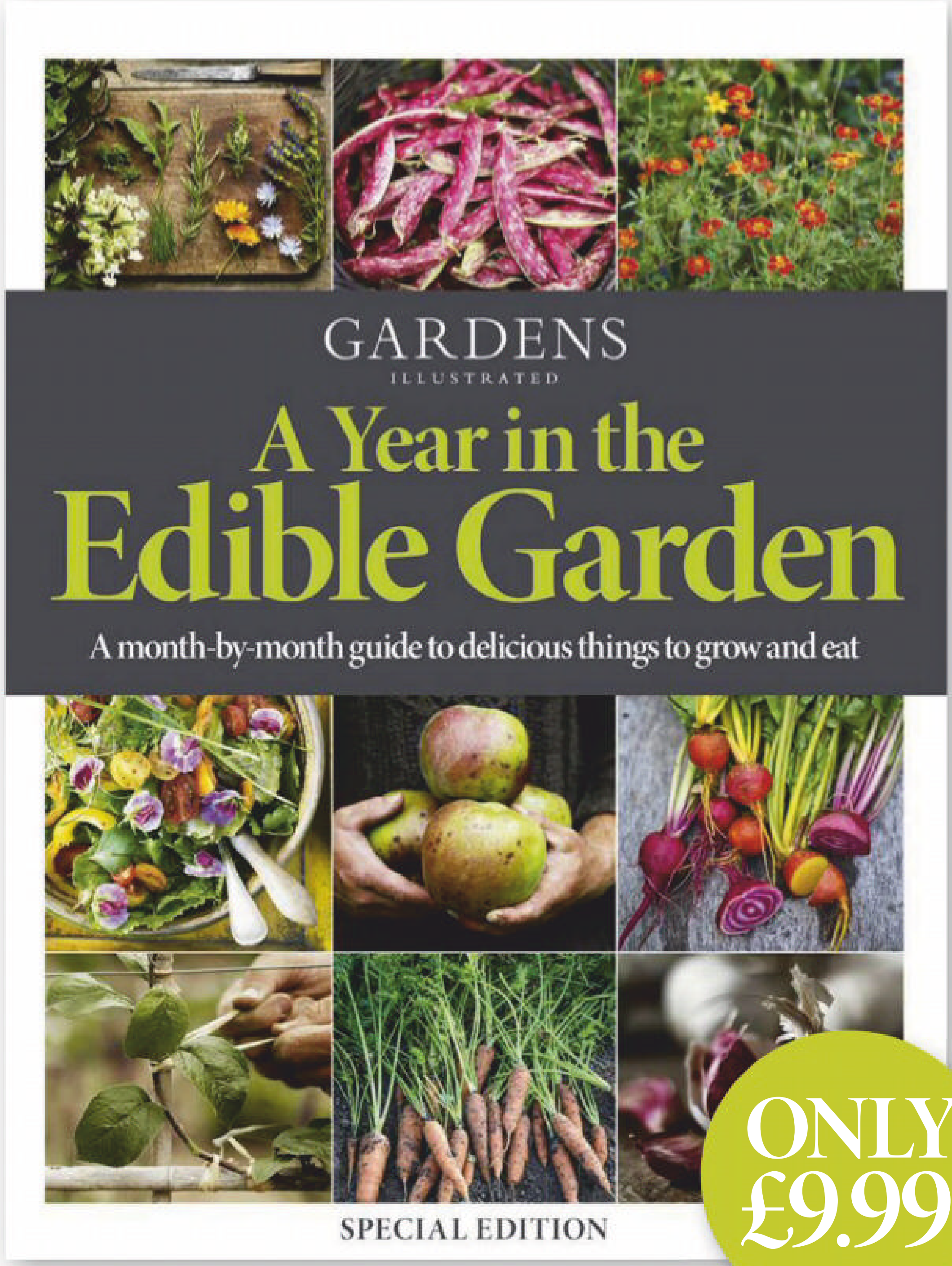

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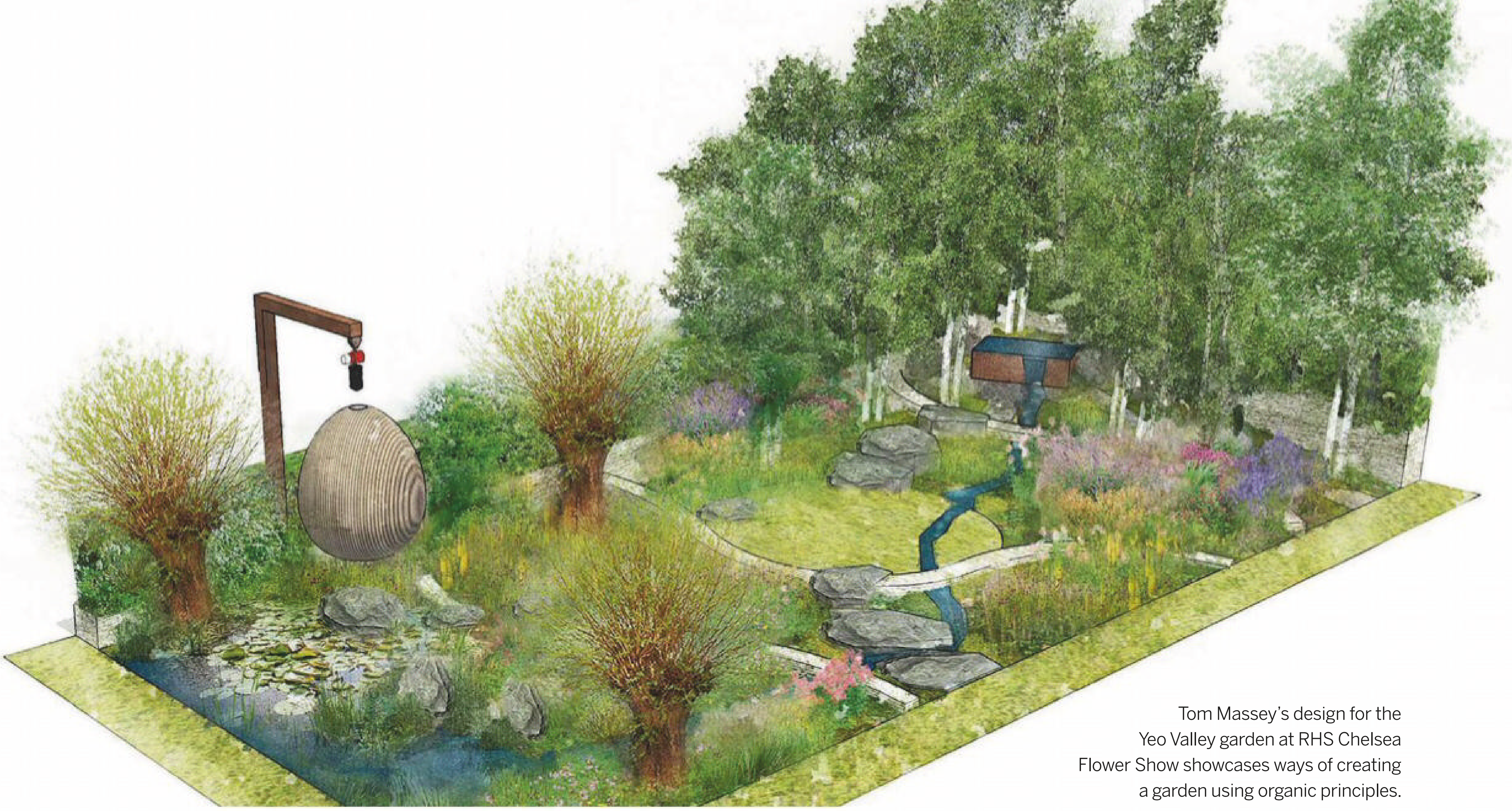

Tom Massey's design for the Yeo Valley garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show showcases ways of creating a garden using organic principles.

FRIDAY 24 APRIL 2020

HORTUS LOCI CHELSEA PLANT & GARDEN PREVIEW

Join our reader day to learn about the ground-breaking organic garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show with designer Tom Massey

GUEST SPEAKER

Tom Massey has already had show garden success with award-winning designs at Hampton Court Palace, Chelsea and the Singapore Garden Festival. His gardens stand out for their skilled combination of hard and soft landscaping.

This year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show will look to promote a much more sustainable approach to gardens with every show garden taking into consideration the way that plants and materials have been sourced, grown and used. It is also the first year that there will be a garden completely founded on organic principles. Designed by Tom Massey for organic dairy company Yeo Valley, with plants grown by Hortus Loci and advice from the Soil Association, the garden will bring together a tapestry of plants with the aim of encouraging wildlife and supporting pollinators.

Our reader day held at Hortus Loci nursery, will reveal how all of Tom's plants are being grown to strict organic specifications. On your visit to the nursery, you'll get a sneak peek of all the Chelsea-bound plants just before they head up to the showground, hear from **Tom Massey** about his design and the challenges involved in putting the garden together, as well as hearing from **Andi Strachan** and **Sarah Mead** from Yeo Valley about how the principles from their organic garden in Somerset have been translated to a show garden. **PLUS** you'll gain lots of advice on how to garden more sustainably and organically yourself. Your day includes a delicious lunch and time to browse the nursery and make your own plant selections with a special £5 discount.

EVENT DETAILS

Price £85 per person*, including lunch and refreshments.

Date Friday 24 April, 2020.
Venue The Plant Centre, Hortus Loci, Hound Green, Hook, Hampshire RG27 8LQ.

Programme
10am Arrival, coffee and cake.
10.30am Guided tour of the nursery and the Chelsea plant stock beds.
12 noon Lunch provided by on-site Hobo.co artisan café and kitchen.
1.30pm Tom Massey, Sarah Mead and Andi Strachan talk about the Yeo Valley Organic Garden at Chelsea.

For the rest of the afternoon you are free to explore the nursery and buy plants with your special £5 discount voucher. You can also sign up on the day for a loyalty card entitling you to a 10 per cent discount for further purchases at The Plant Centre Hortus Loci.

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Booking is essential. Please advise us of any dietary or accessibility requirements.

TO BOOK

Online gardensillustrated.com/events-and-offers
Tel 0871 230 7156.†

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†Calls to this number from a BT landline will cost 13p per minute plus network extras. Call from mobiles and other providers may vary. Overseas readers should call +44 115 896 0368.
*A transaction fee applies to posted tickets. *Gardens Illustrated* reserves the right to change any element of any event due to circumstances beyond its reasonable control.

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WEST COUNTRY KITCHEN GARDENS

From plot to plate, our four-day reader holiday uncovers some of the South West's most exciting potagers and chefs' gardens

TOUR HOST

Sarah Wain
Sarah, along with her husband Jim Buckland, is the inspirational force behind the restoration of the Kitchen Garden at West Dean, Sussex, where they perfected the growing of both fruit and vegetable crops.

With the call to grow your own becoming ever louder, our tour offers help, inspiration and expertise on how to grow the finest kitchen garden produce throughout the year. We visit a contrasting selection of the very best examples of kitchen gardens in the South West: we are taken from the plot to the plate at both **The Pig at Combe** and at Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's organic smallholding at **River Cottage**; at **South Wood Farm** we see Arne Maynard's design for a productive potager and we glimpse true estate gardening at **Edmondsham House**, while also visiting the unusual 18th-century 'serpentine' wall of the kitchen garden at **Deans Court**. As well as organic gardening, we also consider the no-dig approach, as espoused by **Charles Dowding** at his own impressively productive garden and come bang up to date with a visit to recently opened boutique hotel **The Newt** with its decorative kitchen garden. The tour is based at the Georgian **Summer Lodge Hotel** in the Dorset village of Evershot and surrounded by rolling hills, with a small kitchen garden of its own and where guests will be warmly welcomed.

BOOKING DETAILS

Price per person, based on two people sharing is £2,595 (a single supplement of £300 is levied by the hotel).

The price includes: three nights' bed & breakfast accommodation at Summer Lodge; three dinners with wine; plus three lunches, and transport from Bristol Parkway Railway Station or Summer Lodge. The price does not include extras or travel insurance. Please note that hotels used by Boxwood Tours are invariably hotels of character featuring a variety of rooms and styles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK PLEASE CONTACT

Boxwood Tours, 1 West Street, Buckingham HK18 1HL.
Tel +44 (0)1341 429286. **Email** mail@boxwoodtours.co.uk
Website boxwoodtours.co.uk

This tour has been arranged exclusively for readers of *Gardens Illustrated* by Boxwood Tours Quality Garden Holidays, a specialist garden tour company set up in 1990. Please note that itineraries may be subject to change for reasons beyond *Gardens Illustrated*'s control.

JASON INGRAM

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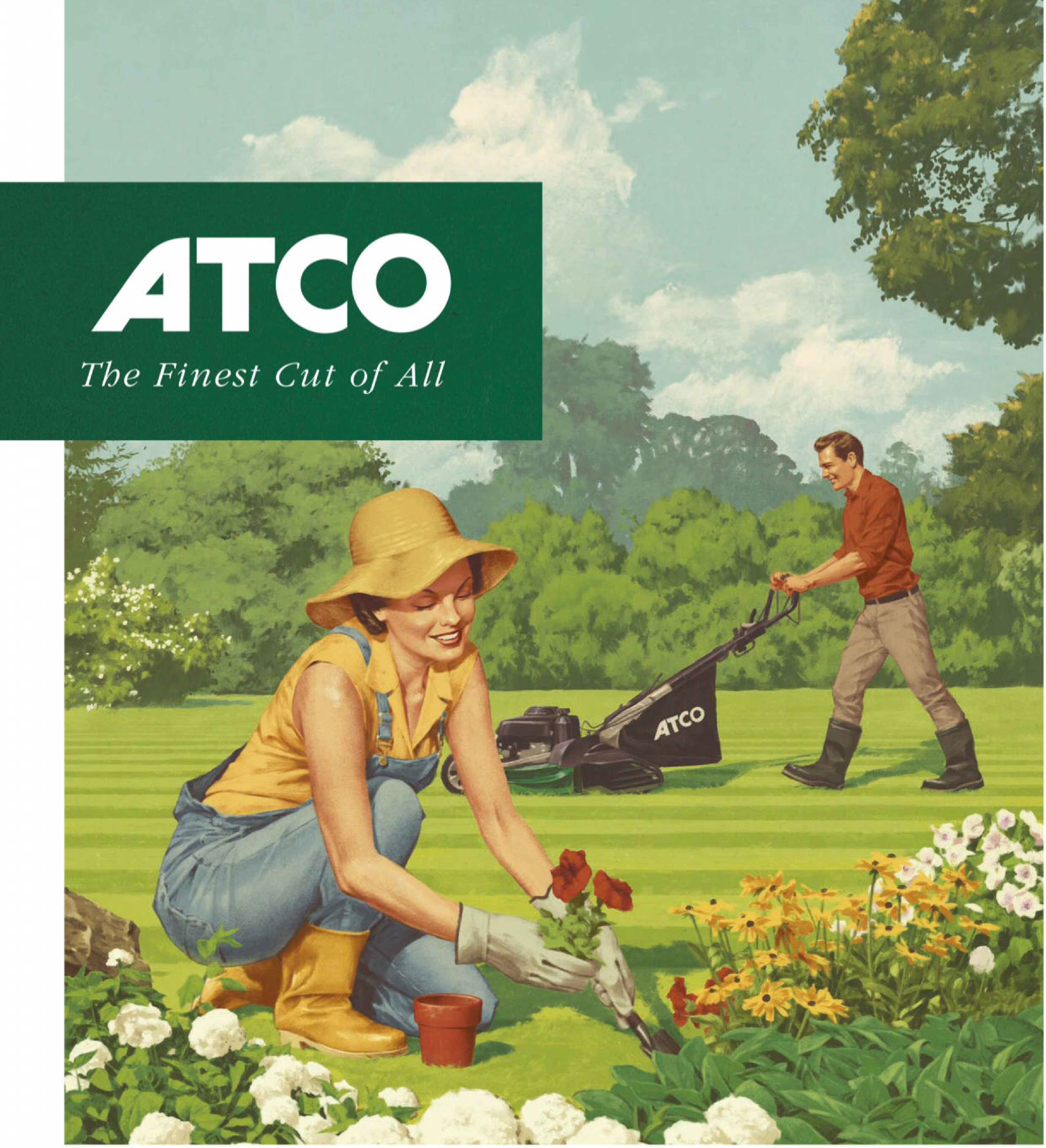
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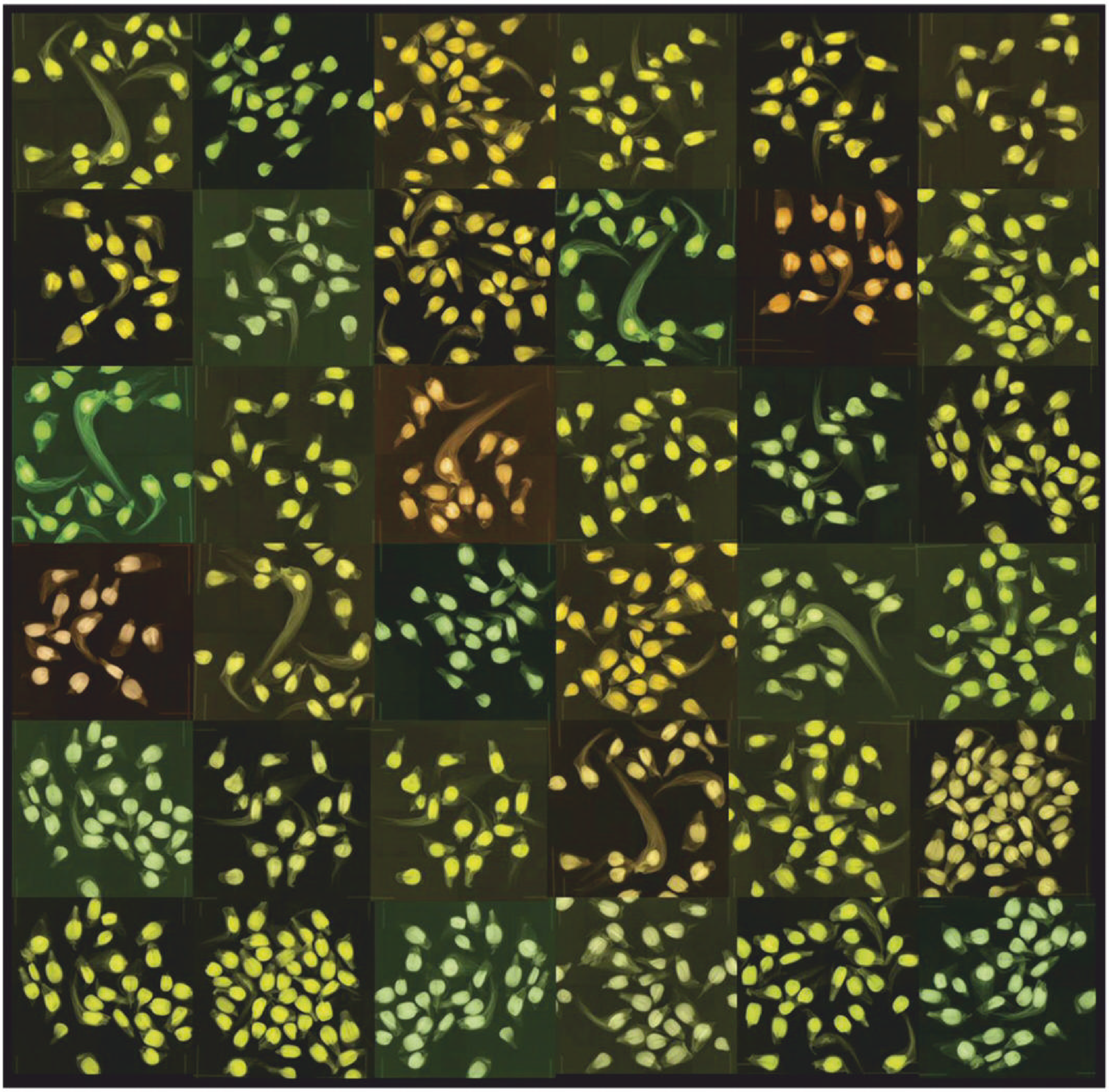
Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month



Seeds of sustainability

With plant diversity rapidly declining and facing threats from global warming, pollution and war, we're at risk of losing many indispensable seed sources. Without seeds and their uses in food, medicine and the environment, we will struggle to sustain ourselves. Five artists explore the global efforts towards protecting vital plant species from extinction in a new exhibition opening at Bradford's Impressions Gallery this month. *Seedscapes: Future-Proofing Nature* reveals how biologists, ecologists and artists from around the world are responding to the challenge. Dornith Doherty's *Husk Corn* (pictured above) from the series *Archiving Eden* (2008-2017) draws attention to a valuable source of anthocyanin, an antioxidant used to treat conditions such as high blood pressure and colds. 9 April to 4 July. Centenary Square, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 1SD. 10am-6pm. Free. The exhibition will go on national tour in July. **impressions-gallery.com**

News

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

HOWARD SOOLEY

Pushing the boundaries

A new exhibition at The Garden Museum in London will examine the relationship between British artist and filmmaker, Derek Jarman, and his garden at Prospect Cottage in Kent. For the first time, Jarman's works of art will appear alongside personal artefacts, including his diaries, sketchbooks, garden notebooks and tools from his cottage. Jarman bought the cottage, a former fisherman's shack, after spotting the 'For Sale' sign while filming on the beach with the actor Tilda Swinton in 1986. After being diagnosed HIV positive in December of that year, Jarman resolved 'to get as much out of life as possible' and set to work on creating a garden without boundaries. The innovative garden would go on to inspire Jarman's later artwork, films and writing, some of which will be highlighted in the exhibition. *Derek Jarman: My Garden's Boundaries are the Horizon* runs from 24 April to 12 July. Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. 10.30am-5pm. £10 with museum entrance. **gardenmuseum.org.uk**

WALK IN THE WOODS

Clothing brand Joules has teamed up with the Woodland Trust in a pledge to plant 250,000 trees by 2022. With the aim of celebrating and preserving British woodland, one tree will be planted for every pair of Joules wellies bought in store and online until 30 April. A woodland walk wouldn't be the same without a pair of wellies after all. See the full range of wellies at ***joules.com***

BRITAIN'S FIRST KOREAN GARDEN

The Eden Project has shared its plans for a new Korean garden – the first of its kind in Britain. The garden is one of several projects at Eden highlighting ecological regeneration taking place around the world. The Korean garden will represent the work undergone in the country to replant woodland that had been stripped following years of war. It also aims to showcase the unique biodiversity within the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea, with native lilacs, oaks and magnolias on display as well as the two countries' national flowers: *Magnolia sieboldii* and *Hibiscus syriacus*. A pair of totem poles, known as *jangseung*, will give visitors an authentic Korean welcome on entry. The completed garden will be unveiled this month; see website below for updates. Bodelva, Cornwall PL24 2SG. Opening times vary. £28.50. **edenproject.com**

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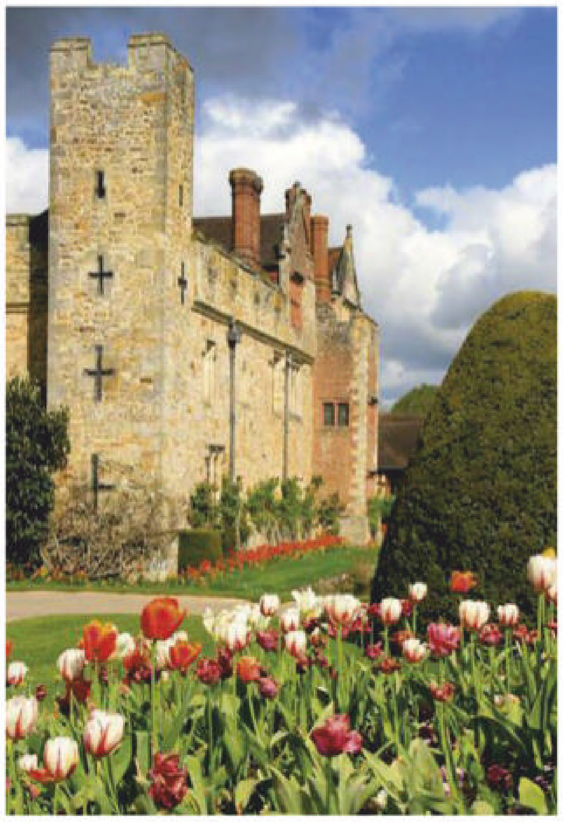


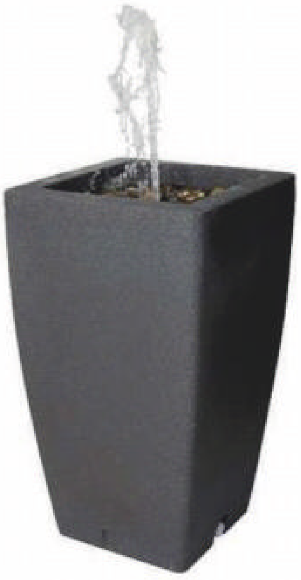
Tulip fever

At one point in the 1600s, tulip bulbs in the Netherlands commanded a price ten times as much as the average yearly wage. The craze for the flowers may have abated slightly, but their variety of style and colour means they remain hugely popular plants. Hever Castle & Gardens in Kent is set to reignite tulip fever this April, thanks to a staggering display around its grounds. More than 35,000 tulips, with 100 different cultivars, will be on show in borders, pots and troughs as well as around the castle walls. Head gardener Neil Miller and his team will be providing tulip tours from Tuesday to Friday at 11.30am (free with gardens entrance). Tulip Celebrations runs from 21 to 26 April. Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG. 10.30am-6pm. £15.55. **hevercastle.co.uk**

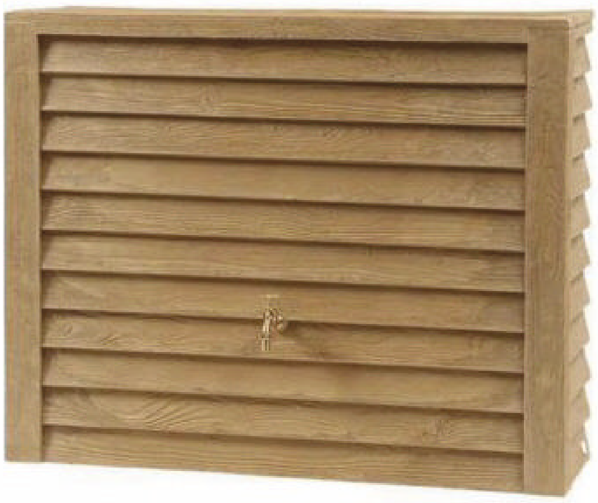
SNOWY SUMMER

Dobbies' new verbascum, 'Snowy Spires', has ice-white blooms with magenta centres and lush, green foliage. This hardy perennial with tall stems makes an elegant addition to garden borders and containers, or indoors in a statement vase as a cut flower. Bees flock to 'Snowy Spires' that begins flowering in June, making it a delightful addition to a summer garden. *Verbascum* 'Snowy Spires' seeds can either be sown in April for planting out in May, or sown in July to August for planting out in October, and flowering the following year. A packet of 50 seeds costs £3.50. **dobbies.com**

3 FOR THE GARDEN… *WATER BUTTS*



BUILT-IN FOUNTAIN
Madison Rain Barrel, in millstone, £203.99, waterbuttsdirect.co.uk



HIGH CAPACITY
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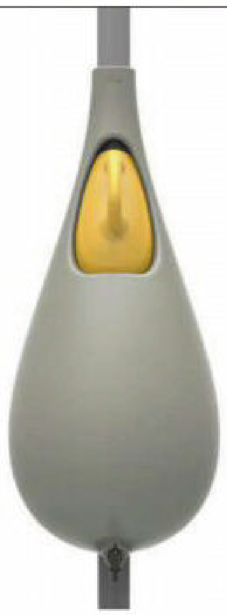

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Pure Raindrop Water Butt, with in-built watering can, £269.99, crocus.co.uk

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Please go to the Garden Masterclass website for event details and tickets.

Learn, share and experience knowledge, skills and ideas in gardening and garden design

gardenmasterclass.org **gardenmasterclass@gmail.com**

Space for shapes

The Cotswold Sculptors Association returns to Abbey House Gardens in Malmesbury this month for an exhibition of indoor and outdoor sculpture. *Creating Spaces 2020* follows the success of 2019's event, which was attended by more than 8,000 art and garden lovers and collectors. The show will be set within the beautiful gardens of Abbey House, created by the late TV gardening expert and naturist, Ian Pollard, also known as 'the naked gardener'. The gardens include a woodland walk with a river running through it. The show runs from 4 April to 31 May. All sculptures on display will be available to purchase. Abbey House Gardens, Malmesbury, Wiltshire SN16 9AS. 11am-5.30pm. £8. Tickets can be purchased at the gate. **cotswoldsculptorsassociation.com**

In the garden
BARRIER CREAM

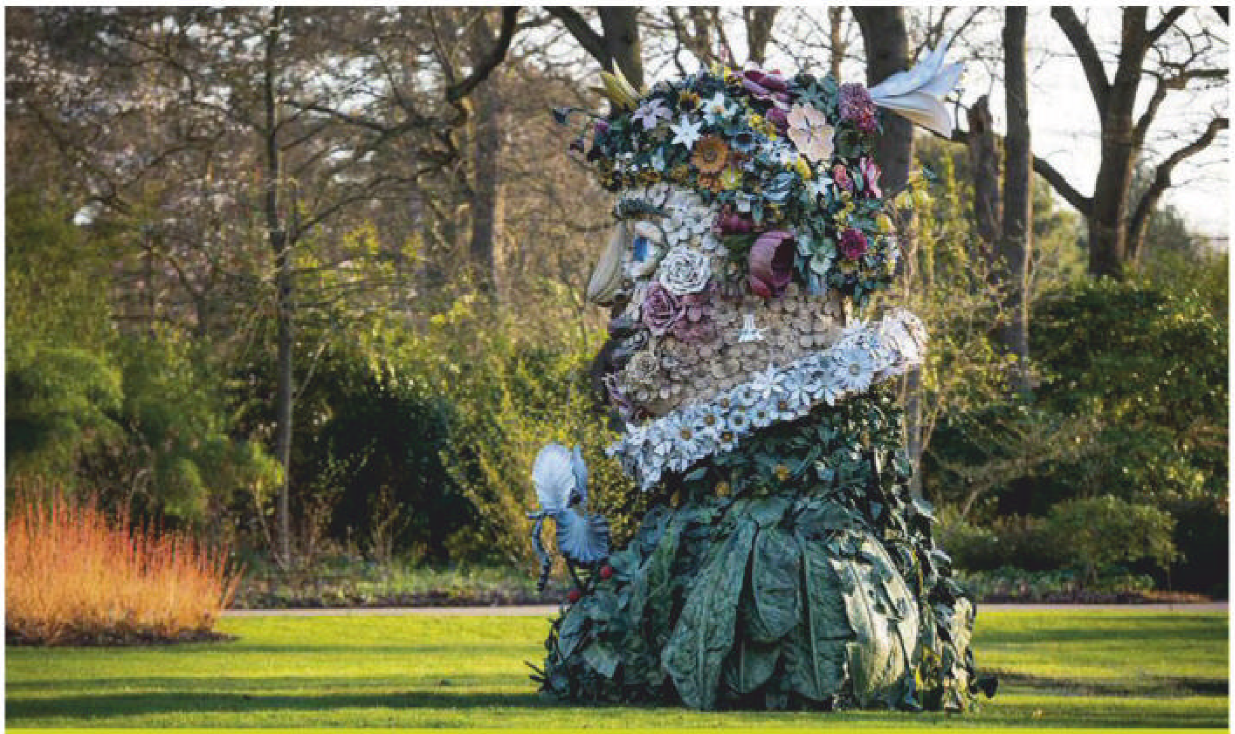
SOFT TOUCH

London gift and homeware brand Heathcote & Ivory has a new protective barrier cream especially for gardeners. In the Garden is a vegan-friendly balm for the hands and body, blended with shea butter, vitamin E and thyme oil to keep skin soft, and carrot and calendula extract to relieve and comfort damaged skin. Apply before or after a gardening session and help alleviagte rough, dry skin. A 200ml pot costs £7. ***heathcote-ivory.com***

RHS

HAPPY GARDENING

The ninth RHS National Gardening Week takes place from 27 April to 3 May. This year's theme, Sowing the Seeds of Friendship, reflects the ethos of the RHS Garden for Friendship, which will feature at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show and aims to combat loneliness by encouraging people to make friends through gardening. The four RHS gardens will be leading the campaign but the RHS is also asking garden lovers to plan activities themselves and register their events online with the aim of inspiring more people to join in the joy of growing and visiting beautiful green spaces. To register an event or activity and to find tips on how else to get involved, visit **rhs.org.uk/nationalgardeningweek**



Feast for the eyes

Visitors to RHS Wisley will get an extra treat this month, thanks to *The Four Seasons* sculptures by American artist and filmmaker Phillip Haas. His mammoth fibreglass creations, standing at nearly 5m tall, are inspired by the prolific Renaissance paintings of Italian artist Guiseppe Arcimboldo. Each figure represents one of the four seasons and brings together seasonal fruit, vegetables, flowers and crops, to achieve an overall striking and thought-provoking work of art. The exhibition runs until 30 September. Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Entrance with garden admission price of £16.50. **rhs.org.uk/wisley**

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Diary

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON AND ANNIE GATTI

① **Trentham Gardens Spring Bulb Festival** Enjoy a display of spring bulbs, with boats planted with tulips and daffodils, along the mile-long 'Capability' Brown lake making a colourful addition to the garden planting. 3 April – 31 May. 9am-7pm. The Trentham Estate, Stone Road, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 8JG. Tel 01782 646646, trentham.co.uk

② **Spring Walk and Artisan Fair** Explore the gardens at Kelmarsh Hall and browse artisan stalls selling gifts, homewares, food and drinks. 5 April, 11am-3pm. £3. Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens, Kelmarsh, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN6 9LY. Tel 01604 686543, kelmarsh.com

③ **Exploring Styles in Naturalistic Planting** Join gardeners Matthew Reese and Rory Dusoir for a discussion on the different styles of naturalistic planting, including at Malverleys and the Oudolf Field at Hauser & Wirth, Somerset. 7 April, 7-8pm. £25. Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk

④ **Yeo Valley Organic Garden** See the inspiration behind designer Tom Massey's organic show garden at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, in the first of a series of garden open days. 15 and 28 April, £65, to include lunch and afternoon tea, and a guided tour. Holt Farm, Bath Road, Blagdon, North Somerset BS40 7SQ. Tel 01761 462 798. yeovalley.co.uk

⑤ **RHS Flower Show Cardiff** Get inspiration for making a wildlife-friendly garden at this year's show with gardens from the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales and the Giving Nature a Home Partnership. 17-19 April. Advance tickets from £12.25. Bute Park, Cardiff Castle, Cardiff CF10 3ER. rhs.org.uk

⑥ **Brogdale Hanami Festival** Visit Brogdale Collections in Kent for a celebration of all things Japanese, and picnic Japanese-style beneath the stunning blossoms of the ornamental cherry orchards. 18-19 April, 10am-4pm. £9. Brogdale Farm, Brogdale Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8XZ. Tel 01795 536250, brogdalecollections.org

⑦ **Great Comp Garden Plant Fair** Visit one of Kent's finest spring gardens – and home of the Dyson *Salvia* collection – for its Spring Fling and Plant Fair, featuring specialist nurseries from across the south of England. 19 April, 11am-5pm. £8.50. Great Comp Garden, Comp Lane, Platt, nr Sevenoaks, Kent N15 8QS. greatcompgarden.co.uk

⑧ **Traditional English Garden** Explore ten acres of garden, mostly designed by Arabella Lennox-Boyd, which include a rose garden, pond, herb garden, fruit, vegetable and cutting garden, when Rooksnest in Berkshire opens for the NGS. 22 April, 11am-4pm. Ermin Street, Lambourn Woodlands, Berkshire RG17 7SB. ngs.org.uk

⑨ **Earth Optimism Workshops** Take part in a series of workshops on wildlife and sustainable gardening, including an early morning moth survey, as part of Cambridge Conservation Initiative's Earth Optimism event. 23-24 April. 7.30am-5pm. Cambridge University Botanic Garden, 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel 01223 336265, botanic.cam.ac.uk

⑩ **Auricula Show** Discover the beauty of this English Florists' favourite at the West Midlands National Auricula & Primula Society's Auricula Show. Open to non-members. 25 April, 2-4pm. Arden School, Knowle, West Midlands B93 0PT. auriculaandprimula.org.uk

⑪ **Spring Bulb Workshop** Learn how to use spring bulbs for succession planting with designer Marylyn Abbott at her Hampshire garden. 28 April, 11am-1.30pm. £59. West Green House Gardens, Thackham's Lane, nr Hartley Wintney, Hook, Hampshire RG27 8JB. Tel 01252 844611, westgreenhouse.co.uk

JASON INGRAM

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Visit Peter's website at **www.bredbypetermoore.co.uk** for stockists, both garden centres and mail order.

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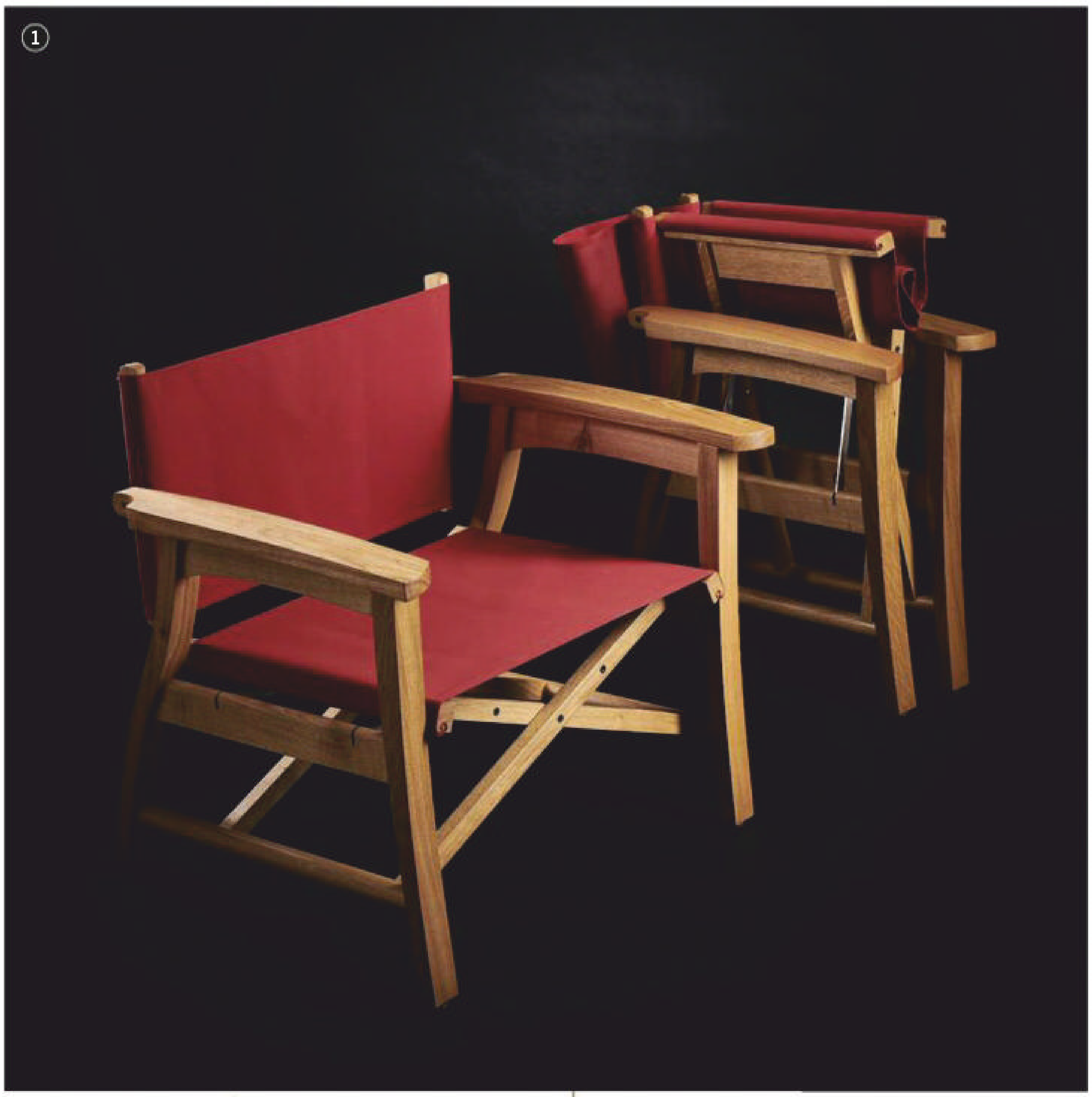
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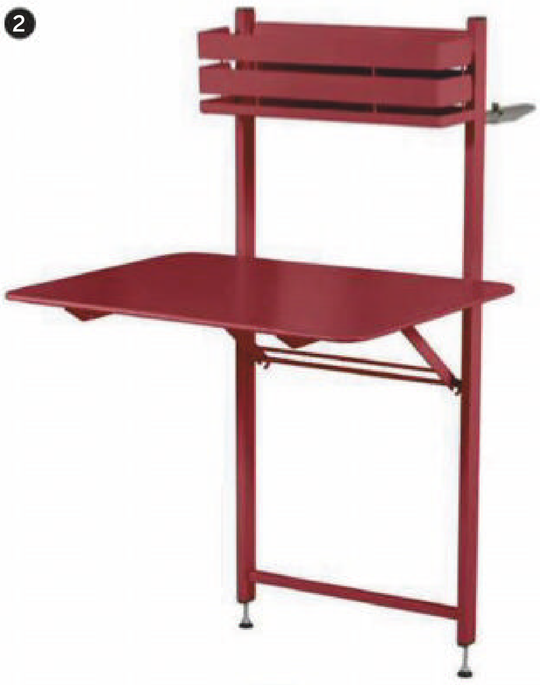
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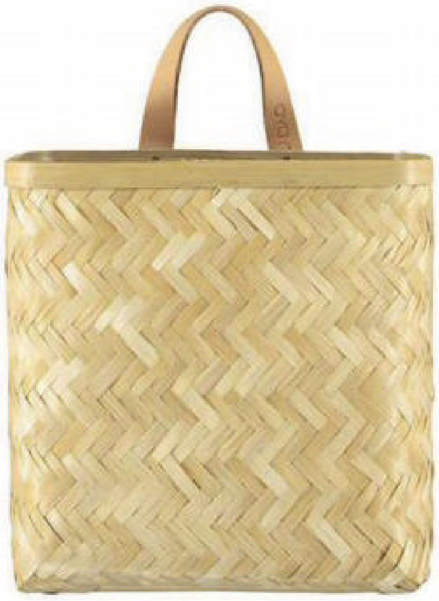
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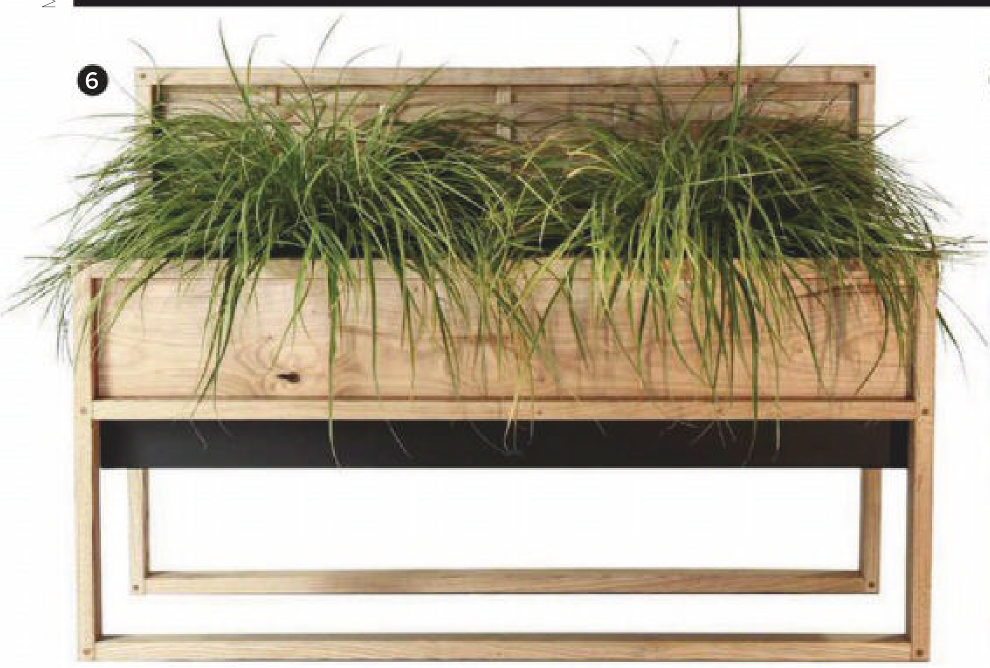
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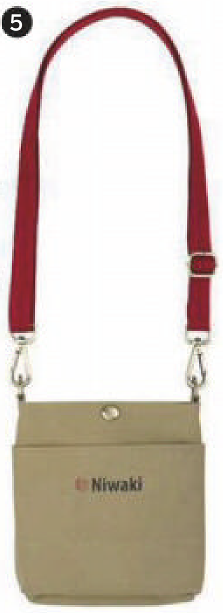
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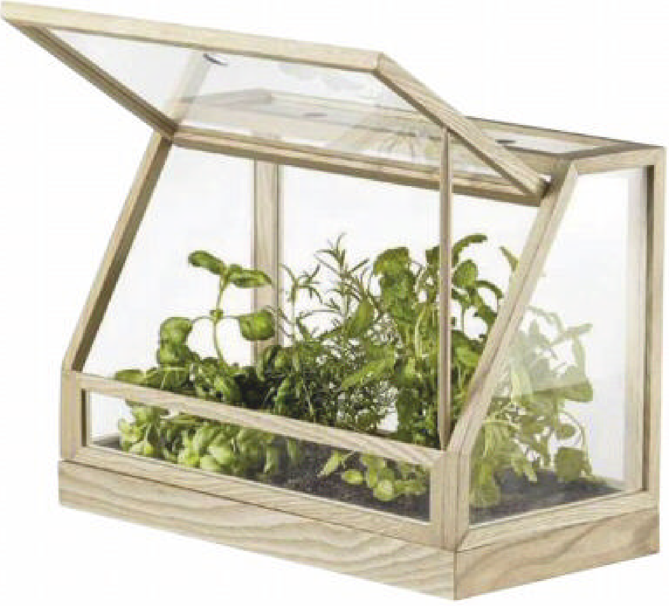
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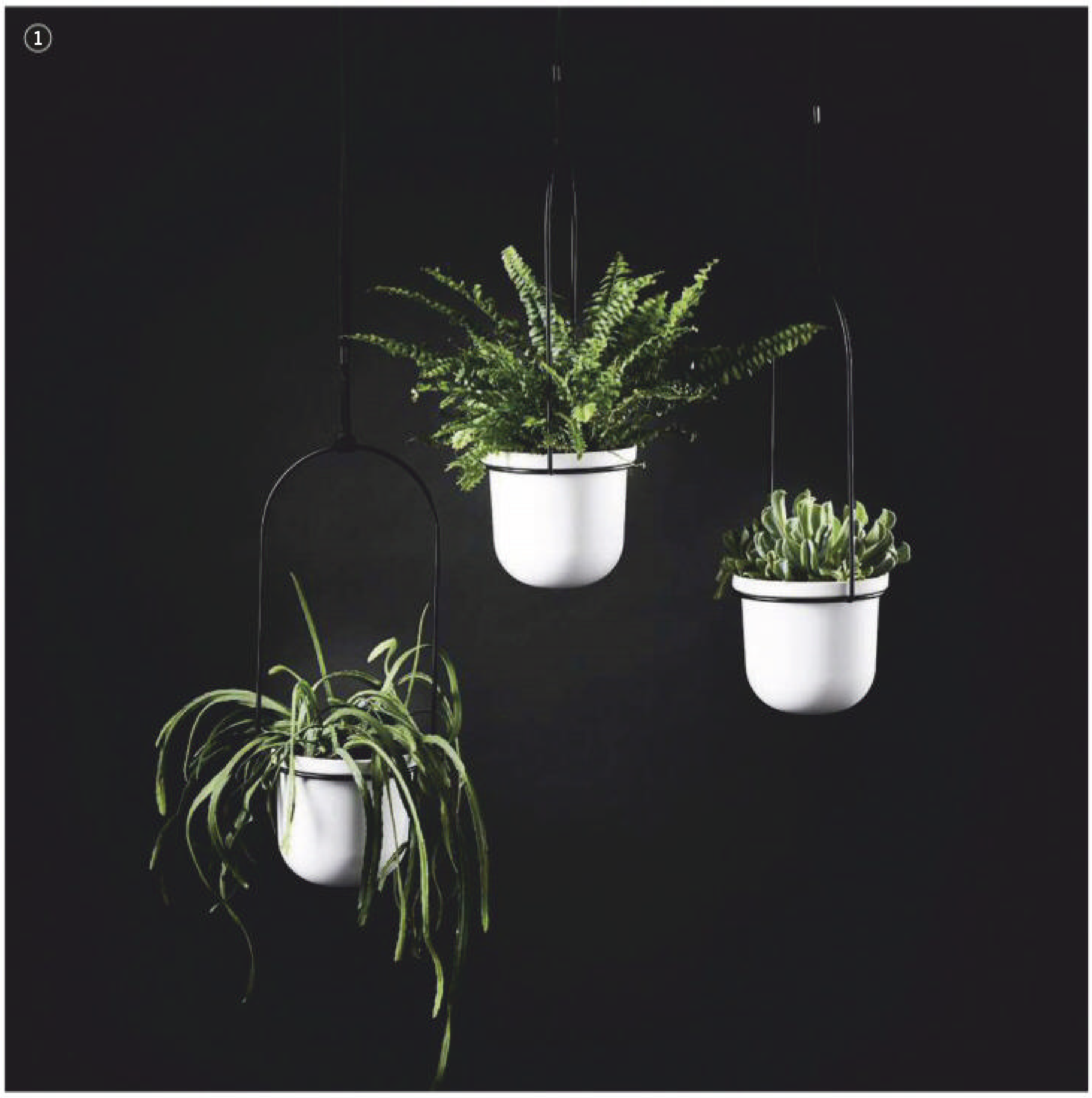
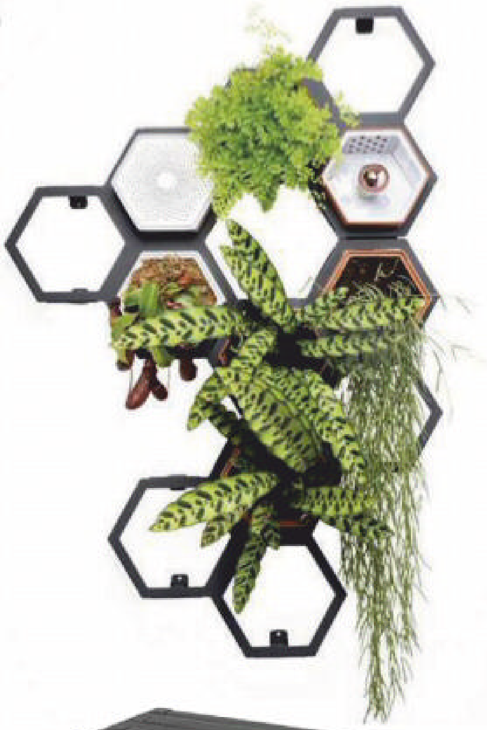
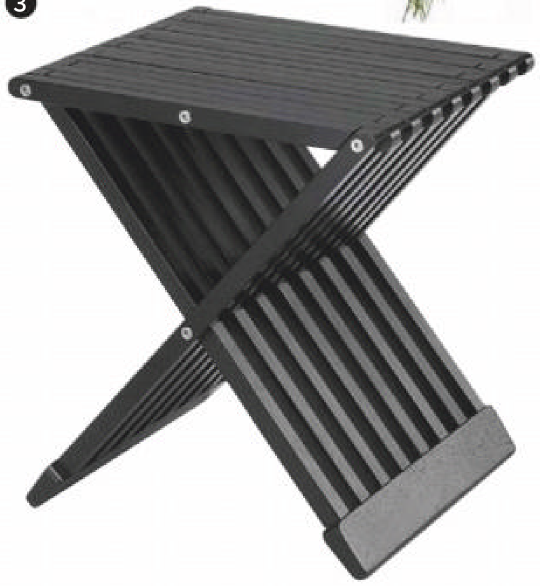
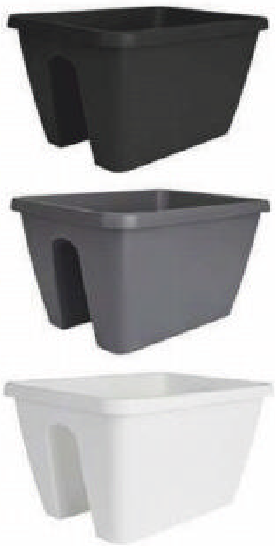
1. Oak Director's Armchair, swivel back, red, €1,460, atelierlavalette.com **2. Fermob Balcon Bistro Foldable Table,** pepper, £349, 020 7692 4001, madeindesign.co.uk **3. Sporta Wall basket,** bamboo, £27.20 each, 020 8194 8427, oyoylivingdesign.co.uk **4. Design House Stockholm Greenhouse Mini,** ash, £256, naken.co.uk **5. Niwaki Pouch,** water-resistant canvas, £24, 01747 445059, niwaki.com **6. Peggy Planter and Mini Screen,** from £750, makerandwright.co.uk

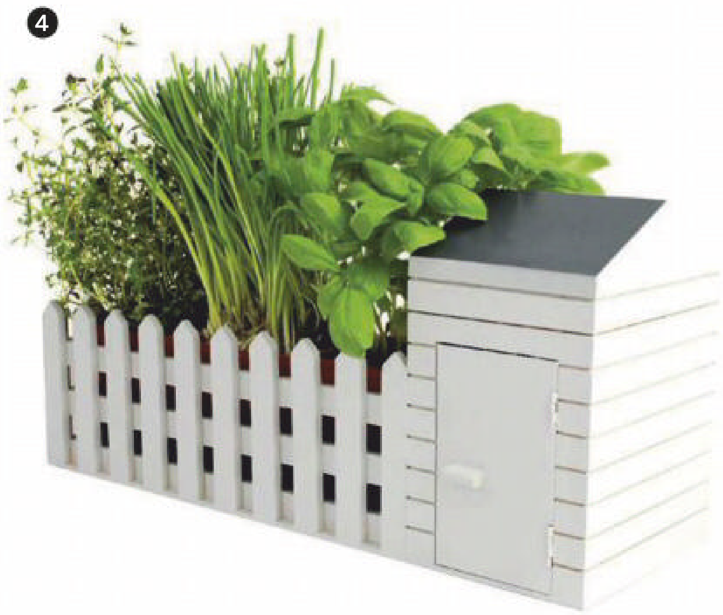






6
SMALL
GARDEN
STYLE





1. Triflora Hanging Planter (set of three with adjustable mounting rod), white, £60, 0800 587 7645, amara.com **2. Horticus Vertical Garden Kit,** steel and terracotta, £582 (medium), horticusliving.com **3. Fionia Folding Stool/Table,** black, £225, 0345 605 2505, worm.co.uk **4. Indoor Allotment Planter,** £24.99, 01827 839041, prezzybox.com **5. Barcelona Flower Bridge, balcony planter,** living black, anthracite and white, £12.59 each, elho.com **6. *Small Garden Style* by Isa Hendry Eaton and Jennifer Blaise Kramer,** £16.99, hive.co.uk **7. Design Letters Stool and Storage,** black handle, £112, 020 3880 0027, connox.co.uk

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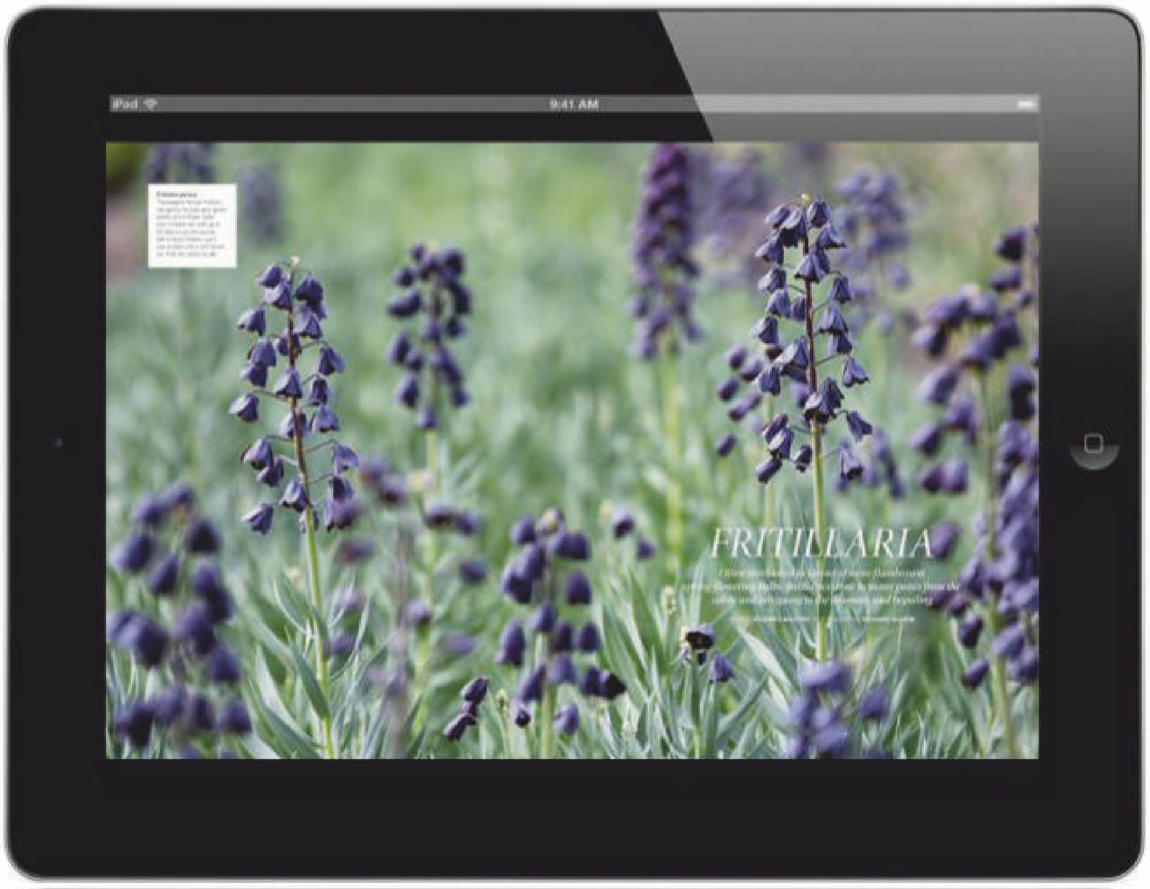
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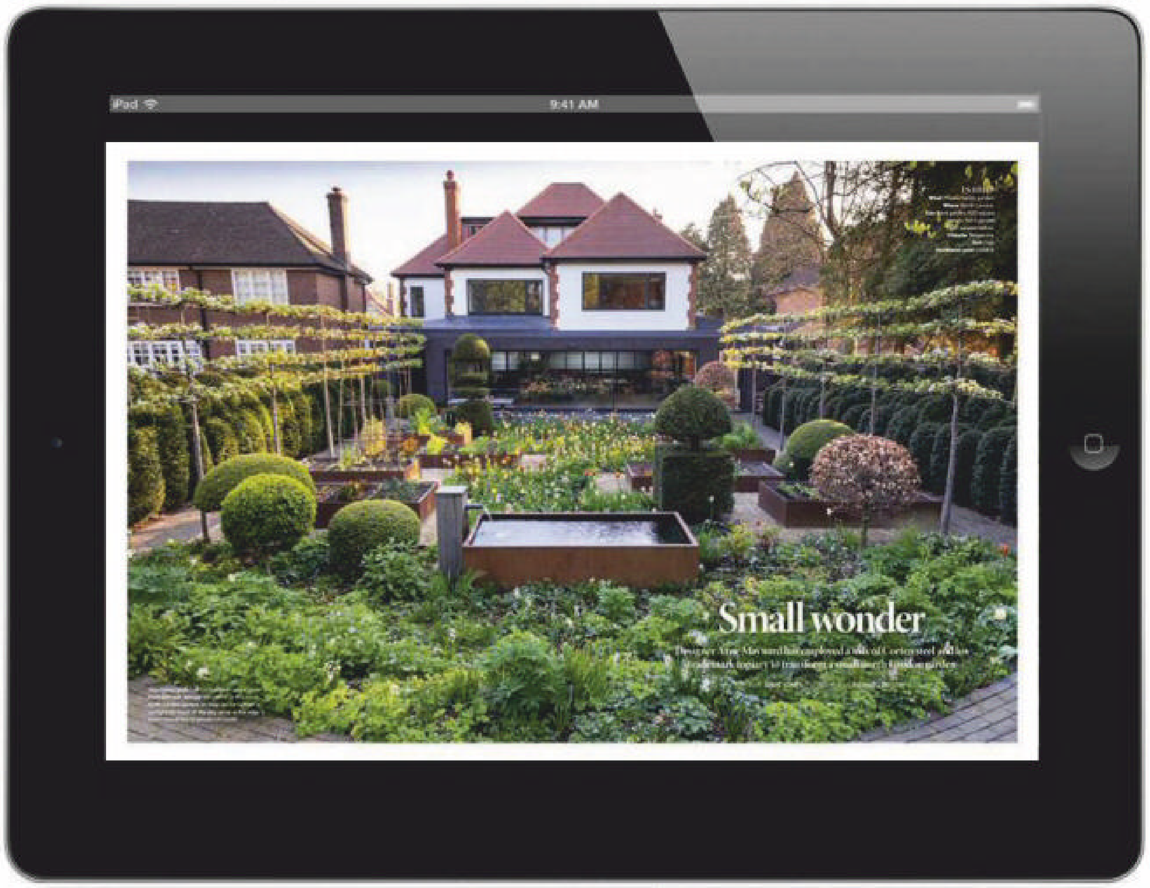
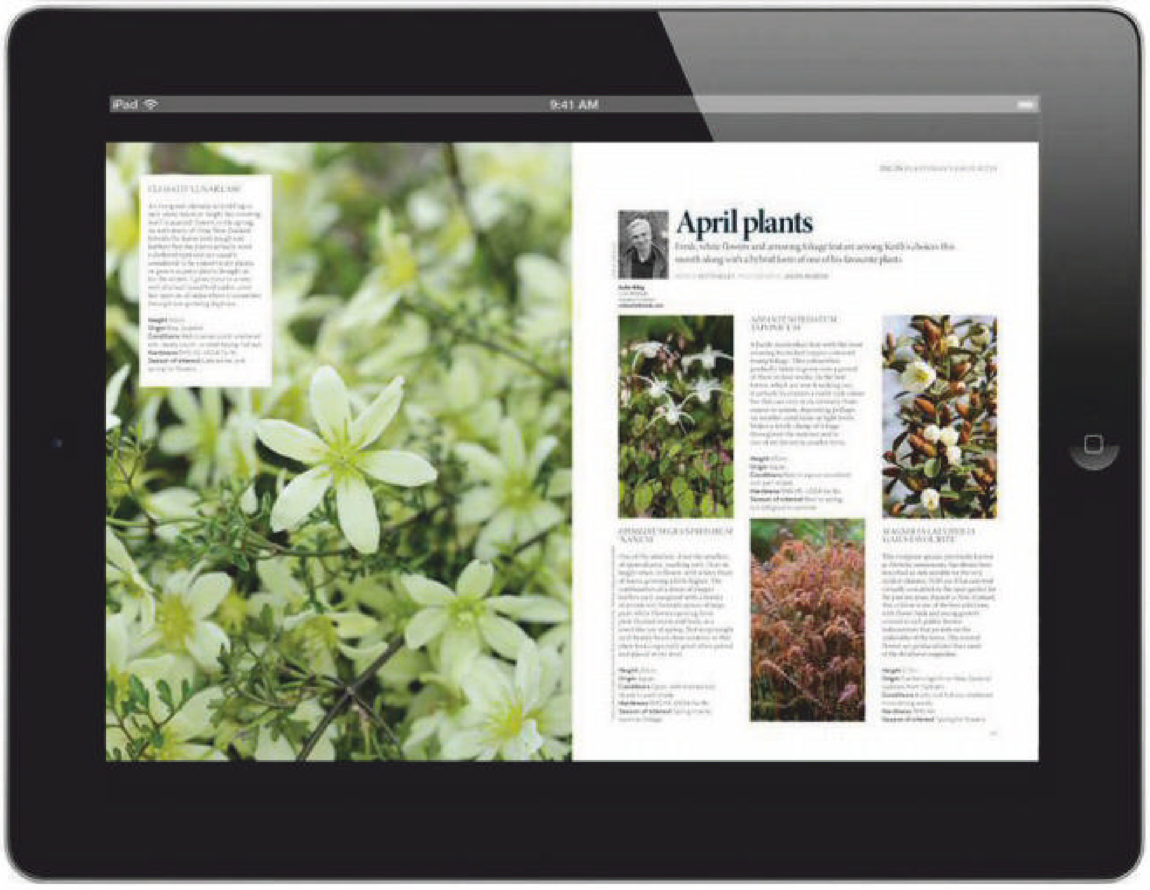

Small wonder


April plants

A must-have read for passionate gardeners, *Gardens Illustrated* magazine provides a unique insight into the world's most beautiful gardens, expert advice and planting ideas.

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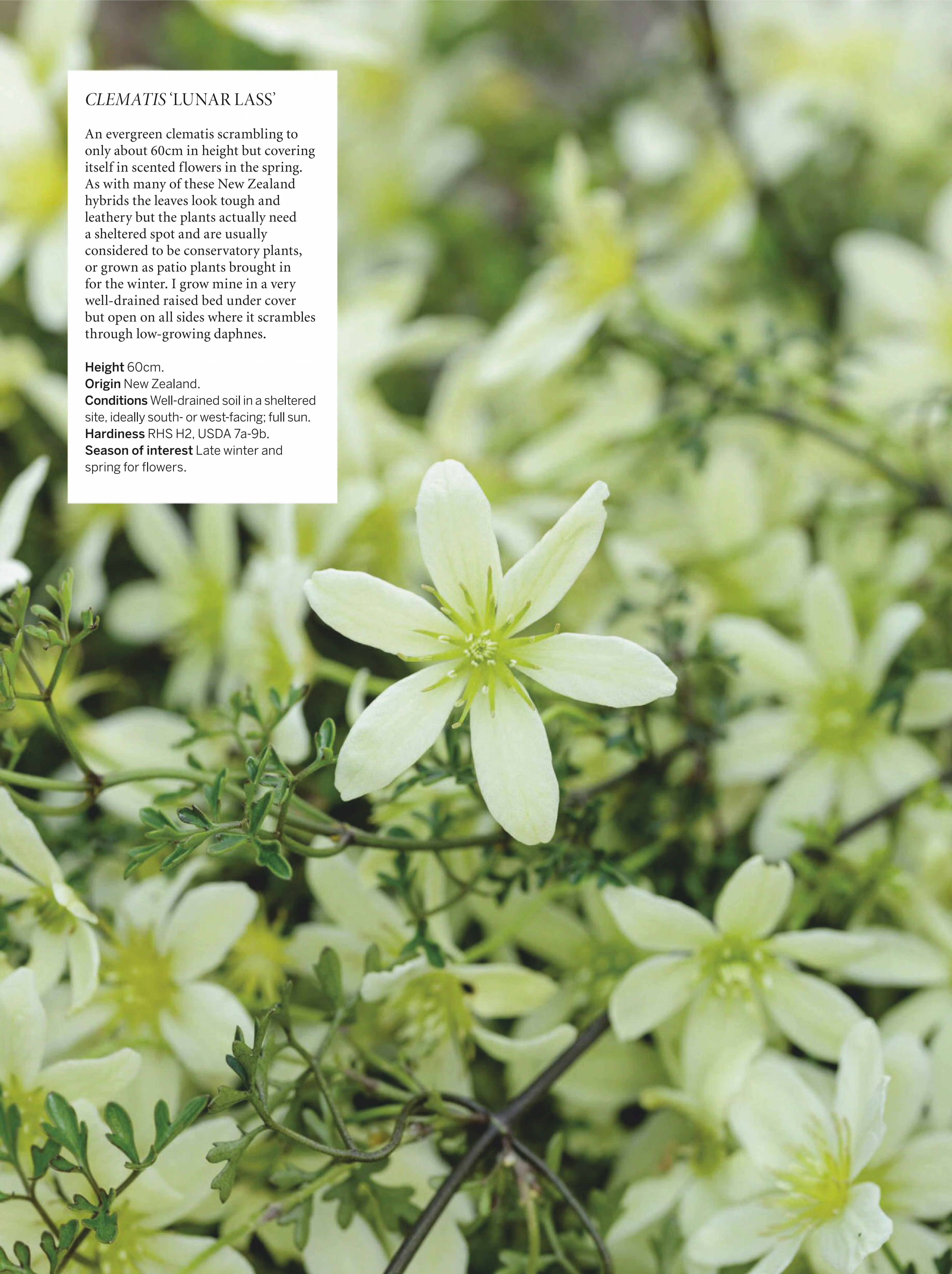
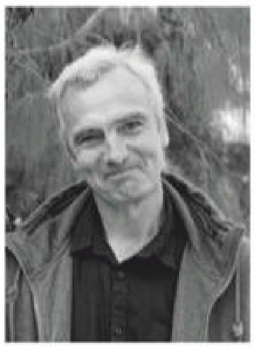


CLEMATIS 'LUNAR LASS'

An evergreen clematis scrambling to only about 60cm in height but covering itself in scented flowers in the spring. As with many of these New Zealand hybrids the leaves look tough and leathery but the plants actually need a sheltered spot and are usually considered to be conservatory plants, or grown as patio plants brought in for the winter. I grow mine in a very well-drained raised bed under cover but open on all sides where it scrambles through low-growing daphnes.

Height 60cm.
Origin New Zealand.
Conditions Well-drained soil in a sheltered site, ideally south- or west-facing; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H2, USDA 7a-9b.
Season of interest Late winter and spring for flowers.



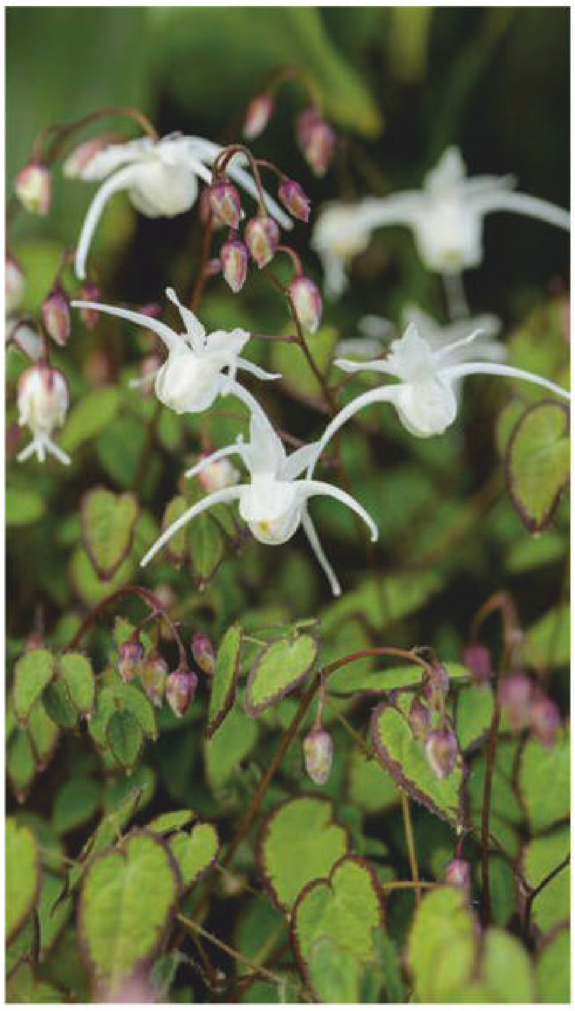
CHARLIE HOPKINSON

April plants

Fresh, white flowers and arresting foliage feature among Keith's choices this month along with a hybrid form of one of his favourite plants

WORDS KEITH WILEY PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

Keith Wiley
runs Wildside
nursery in Devon
wileyatwildside.com



EPIMEDIUM GRANDIFLORUM 'NANUM'

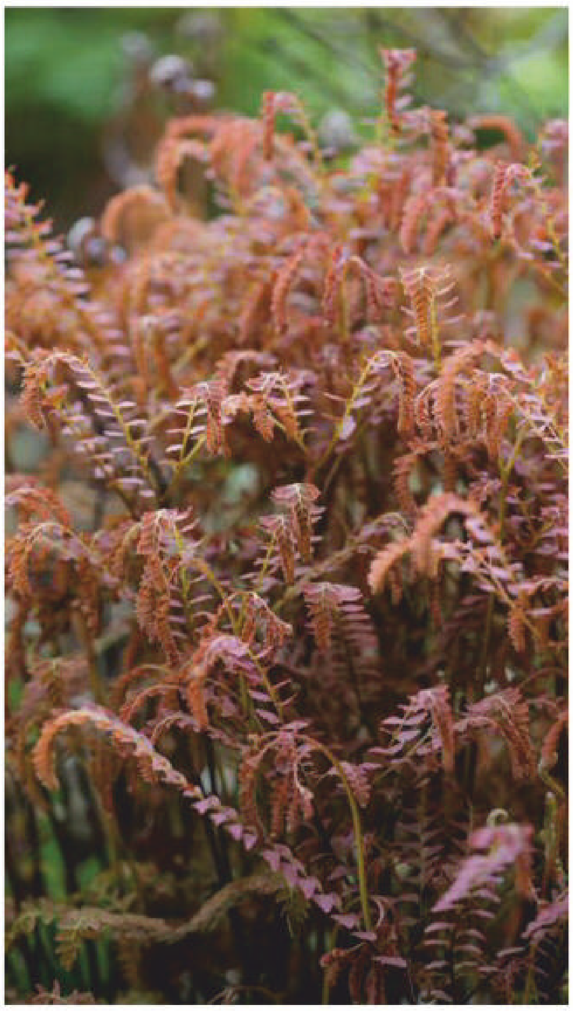
One of the smallest, if not *the* smallest, of epimediums, reaching only 15cm in height when in flower, with a later flush of leaves growing a little higher. The combination of a dome of dapper leaflets each margined with a border of purple red, beneath sprays of large, pure-white flowers opening from pink-flushed stems and buds, is a jewel-like joy of spring. Not surprisingly such beauty bears close scrutiny so this plant looks especially good when potted and placed at eye level.

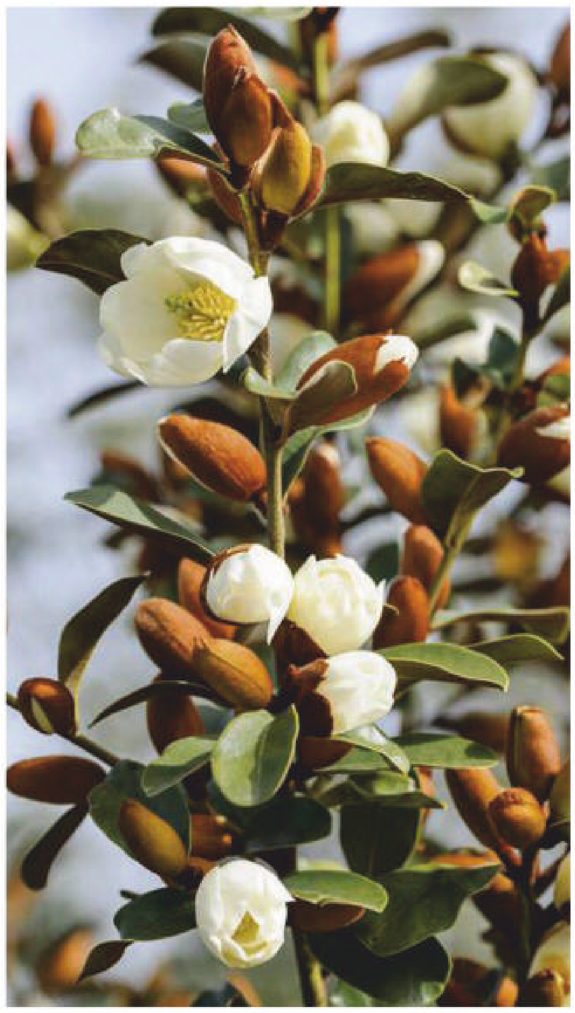
Height 20cm.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Open, well-drained soil; shade to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4a-8b.
Season of interest Spring mainly, summer foliage.

ADIANTUM PEDATUM 'JAPONICUM'

A hardy maidenhair fern with the most amazing burnished copper-coloured young foliage. This colouration gradually fades to green over a period of three to four weeks. In the best forms, which are worth seeking out, it unfurls its croziers a really rich colour but this can vary in its intensity from season to season, depending perhaps on weather conditions or light levels. Makes a lovely clump of foliage throughout the summer and is one of my favourite smaller ferns.

Height 45cm.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Best in a good woodland soil; part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.
Season of interest Best in spring, but still good in summer.





MAGNOLIA LAEVIFOLIA 'GAIL'S FAVOURITE'

This evergreen species, previously known as *Michelia yunnanensis*, has always been described as only suitable for the very mildest climates. With me it has survived virtually unscathed in the open garden for the past ten years. Raised in New Zealand, this cultivar is one of the best selections, with flower buds and young growth covered in rich golden-brown indumentum that persists on the undersides of the leaves. The scented flowers are produced later than most of the deciduous magnolias.

Height 2-3m.
Origin Garden origin from New Zealand (species from Yunnan).
Conditions Acidic soil; full sun, sheltered from strong winds.
Hardiness RHS H4.
Season of interest Spring for flowers.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. ¹Hardiness ratings given where available.

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PAEONIA CLUSII

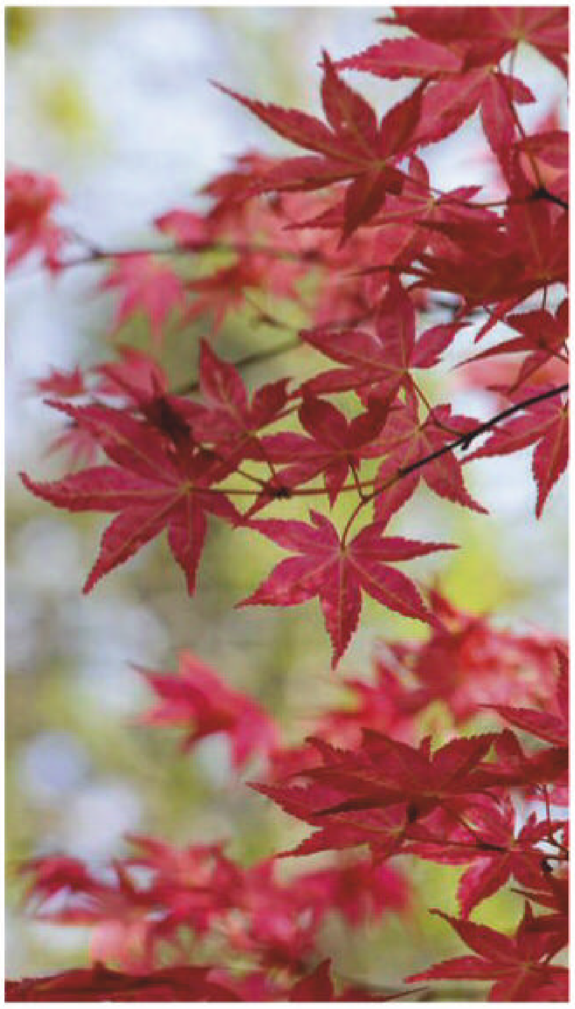
A species herbaceous peony with class stamped all over it. A relatively low-growing plant with dissected leaves and pristine white, large, scented flowers of beautiful form, flowering for several weeks. In the wild it grows at high altitudes in Crete, so is temperature hardy in the UK, but as it comes into growth very early it is vulnerable to spring frosts. It also prefers well-drained conditions so I grow it in a stony raised bed in an open-sided airy polytunnel where it gets better every year.

Height 40-50cm.
Origin Crete.
Conditions Well-drained soil; sheltered, sunny site.
Hardiness RHS H3 (because of early growth).
Season of interest Spring for flowers; spring and summer for foliage.

UVULARIA SESSILIFOLIA 'VARIEGATA'

A rare woodlander that should be better known. It forms a gently spreading clump of attractive leaves narrowly edged in cream, which gives the plant a creamy-grey appearance that contrasts well with the dark stems and pendent cream flowers. This does spread but not frighteningly so, and only reaching a height of about 30cm, it is delicate and refined enough to coexist peacefully with many other woodlanders, such as trilliums and erthroniums, unlike the similar but distinctly more thuggish and larger, *Disporum sessile* 'Variegatum', which will quickly swamp its neighbours.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Canada and USA.
Conditions Woodlander for part shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring and summer.



ACER PALMATUM 'CORALLINUM'

Japanese maples are such good year-round plants. Nearly all have graceful winter form with the delicate tracery of their naked branches and are renowned for their autumn colour, but it is for the spring colour of the new foliage that I value them. For this there is none more spectacular than 'Corallinum', which for nearly six weeks literally puts even the massed flowering of the evergreen azaleas in the shade. Sadly, there is no autumn colour worth mentioning. AGM.

Height 2m.
Origin Garden, bred at Hillier's Nursery, in 1910 (species Japan).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5b-9b.
Season of interest Spring to early summer for rich colour.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

For me April is the month I primarily associate with erythroniums. In the south of the UK this will be during the first half of the month, but further north it is more likely to be towards the end of April. Here in the South West we are blessed with several gardens in which to see these beautiful flowers.

One of the best is the magical **Greencombe Gardens** near Porlock. This small, three-and-a-half-acre woodland garden is completely organic, and as well as holding one of the National Collections of erythroniums, it also offers many ferns and trilliums. Greencombe Gardens, Porlock, Somerset TA24 8NU. Tel 01643 862363, greencombe.org

Further west in Cornwall is another little-known garden at **Bosvigo House.** Created by artist Wendy Perry over a period of more than 50 years, this woodland garden is carpeted in spring with drifts of erythroniums. hellebores and wood anemones. Bosvigo Lane, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3NH. Tel 01872 275774, bosvigo.com

However, if you want to see these wonderful plants on a larger scale you'll find more extensive naturalised groupings at the National Trust garden at **Knightshayes**, near Tiverton, which provides 50 acres of woodland gardens. Bolham, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7RG. Tel 01884 254665, nationaltrust.org.uk/knightshayes

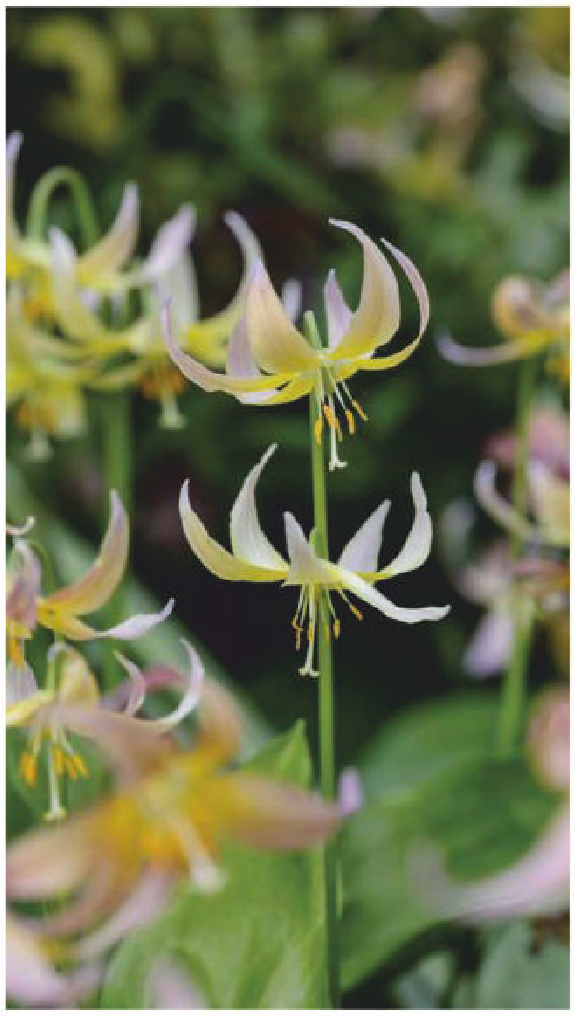
You'll also find extensive plantings at the **Garden House** in south Devon.

▷

ERYTHRONIUM 'JOANNA'

April is the main erythronium flowering month in the UK. If you want your erythronium to produce a good clump of flowers, I'd recommend one of the hybrids and 'Joanna' is a really good choice. It is a cross between a pink-flowered species and a yellow one that serendipity has managed to merge into a winning combination that borders on apricot in colour, while maintaining a species charm in the flower form. Robust in growth and very free-flowering, it is an excellent erythronium for general planting.

Height 40cm in flower.
Origin Garden origin. An *E. revolutum* x *E. tuolumnense* cross bred by John Amand and named for his daughter (species North America).
Conditions Fertile soil in part shade
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring.



RHODODENDRON AUGUSTINII 'LANARTH GREEN EYE'

As this is a species that flowers in April, it is one that is vulnerable to spring frosts although it will tolerate a degree or two of frost without flower damage. If you have the space to accomodate it then it really is one of the glories of the woodland garden. It's a species that can vary widely in colour from pale purple to rose purple in the wild, to near blues in cultivation. Over the years I have grown many colour forms, but I still most cherish this paler incarnation selected from a plant growing in the Cornish garden of its name.

Height 2-3m.
Origin Garden origin (species China).
Conditions Acidic soil; partial shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring.

IRIS 'MRS NATE RUDOLPH'

To be honest, I'm a little ambiguous when it comes to these dwarf bearded iris cultivars. When they're in flower I adore them, but then my passion starts to wain as the season goes on and their foliage becomes just that little bit tatty. I'm sure this says more about my inability to use them correctly and in the future I do have plans to be a little more sympathetic to their growth patterns when choosing where I grow them. However, in the meantime I will just have to luxuriate in their colours and the classic simplicity of their flower form. You will, however, need to watch out for slugs that will damage flowers.

Height 15-20cm.
Origin Garden origin.
Conditions Well-drained soil; sunny spot.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Spring.

▷ This ten-acre garden is made up of different themed areas, with on-site nursery and tea room. The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7LQ. thegardenhouse.org.uk

Between 4 and 7 April this year, you might want to combine your trip with a visit to my own garden at **Wildside**, which is less than from the Garden House, and is opening on those days for erythroniums. Green Lane, Buckland, Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7NP. Tel 01822 855755, wileyatwildside.com

I wouldn't want you to think that the South West is the only part of the UK to see erythroniums this month. Aberdeen-based **Ian Young** is a passionate devotee of all things bulbous whose Bulb Log on the Scottish Rock Garden Club website is both a delight to read and the best source of advice on where to see bulbous plants in the north of the UK. srgc.net

April is also the ideal month for looking around nurseries and discovering new plants with which to refresh tired planting palettes. Top of my list to visit is always **Crûg Farm Nurseries** in North Wales, which re-opens this month. From their extensive plant hunting expeditions, owners Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones have introduced so many new plants into cultivation that a visit to their nursery is always inspiring. Crûg Farm Plants, Griffith's Crossing, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1TU. Tel 01248 670232, crug-farm.co.uk

Ideally, I would break any journey to Crûg Farm at **Ashwood Nurseries**, timing it so I can include a look round owner John Massey's private garden, which this month opens on 12 April. Ashwood Lower Lane, Ashwood, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AE. Tel 01384 401996, ashwoodnurseries.com

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THE GAP SEASON

In the first of a new series, Great Dixter's vegetable gardener Aaron Bertelsen prepares for all eventualities in the April kitchen garden

WORDS AARON BERTELSEN
ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

Seeds
LETTUCE
ROMAINE
Seeds
Artichoke

April is nothing if not unpredictable. Rather like a peevish elderly relative, you never quite know which version of it is going to turn up – benign and beaming with warmth, or changeable and ready to pour cold water on proceedings at a moment's notice. All of this can make life tricky for the gardener. It is very tempting on seeing the first signs of green emerging to rush to get seedlings and plug plants into the ground, especially as the winter crops will have started going over. This can be a lean time in the vegetable garden.

By April, the soil should have warmed up enough to allow you to get started, but remember that there is still a very real risk of frost and even snow at this time of the year. Arm yourself with a roll of horticultural fleece and keep a close watch on the weather forecast so that you are ready to protect young crops from any chilly spring blasts. Despite its rainy reputation, April in the UK is in fact no wetter than any other month of the year. But any rain we do get will be landing on soil that is very likely already waterlogged from the winter. It's extremely important to avoid compacting the soil by treading on it while you're working. Put down boards – old scaffolding boards are perfect – to spread the weight and fork the soil over gently once you've lifted them off.

Of course, this being April, the opposite may also be the case. Daytime temperatures can easily climb well into the 20s, bad news for young plants and seedlings which, with their immature root systems, are particularly susceptible to drying out. Stressed, they may run to seed before you have a chance to make use of them. Be ready to water if the weather is warm, always remembering that a thorough watering once every few days is better than a daily sprinkle and will encourage the roots to reach down deeper into the soil.

As if all that wasn't enough to keep you busy, the warmer weather is also a wake-up call for slugs, who will be emerging from their winter slumber hungry for fresh, young greens. I do my best to steer clear of chemicals and pesticides in the vegetable garden, so I use organic slug pellets. They are effective, but they do tend to break down faster than the conventional pellets so you will need to keep an eye on them and reapply as necessary.

Jobs for April

In the warmer weather, weeds start to spring up. Keep on top of them with regular hoeing. I use a Dutch hoe with a good, sharp edge.

Start sowing warmer weather crops, such as French and borlotti beans, pumpkins, squashes and courgettes. If you're pushed for space, old egg cartons on a sunny windowsill will work very well.

If you haven't done so already, start sowing salad crops. I like to do it in small batches every three to four weeks, so that I have a succession of crops throughout the summer. Stick to lettuce, or a seasonal salad seed mix, and avoid rocket or mustard, as these are very susceptible to flea beetle if sown too early.

Potatoes should go in now. Increasingly, I am growing my new potatoes in bags, rather than in the ground. It's so much easier to earth them up, and to harvest them at the end – just up-end the bag and the potatoes will tumble out. Just remember not to overcrowd them – as a rough guide, each potato will need around ten litres of compost.

Keep a close eye on emerging seedlings to make sure they are not going mouldy or damping off. This is caused by sowing too thickly and over-watering, but is easily rectified by thinning out the tiny plants.

Fruit trees will be kicking into growth now, so give them a good feed and weed around the base. I like to use blood, fish and bone.

If you grow globe artichokes, this is the time to propagate them by making slips. Dig up the plant and, using a sharp knife, cut away sections from around the edge, making sure that each one includes a healthy root and shoot. The newly planted slips are unlikely to produce artichokes until the following year, so to ensure a good supply I dig up and propagate half my plants one year, and half the next.

At this time of year container gardening comes into its own. The beauty of growing in pots is that you can move them around to make the most of the warmth and sunlight and cover them easily – or even bring them inside – if the temperature drops. This is also the time to tidy up any perennial plants in pots. Remove any winter damage and top-dress by scraping off the top 4cm or so of soil and replacing it with high-quality, fresh compost.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CROPS

This time of year is often known as the hungry gap: winter crops are mostly over, while the new season's plantings are just getting under way. But it's not entirely hopeless. This is the time to use up the last of any **kale and Swiss chard** before it runs to seed. Indeed, chard plants will often put on a new burst of fresh leaves at this time. Grab them while you can. Sorrel too will be putting on new growth. Use it in soups or enjoy the distinctive tang of the young leaves in salads – later in the season, it will be too acidic to eat raw.

This is also the time to make the most of **rhubarb**. I love it baked in a tightly covered dish, so that it cooks in its own juices. When it is this young and tender, I prefer not to add sugar, so that the flavour of the fruit shines out.

For me, though, the gastronomic highlight of April – and indeed one of the highlights of the year – is **beet tops**, once they've run to seed. I love their nutty flavour, either steamed or gently sautéed in butter, and served as a green vegetable. Better still, combine them with sharp, salty feta cheese in a delicious tart, a lunchtime staple in my kitchen in the spring.

For Aaron's beet top and feta tart recipe, please go to gardensillustrated.com/recipes

Aaron's latest book, *Grow Fruit and Vegetables in Pots*, is published by Phaidon, £24.95.

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> We are losing so much knowledge and expertise, as people struggle to pass on their collections

GARDENING TALENT

EMMA ROBERTSON

The owner of iris specialist Tor Garden Plants in Devon is passionate about conserving plants for the future

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory Running around my grandad's garden during the summer holidays. The smell of fresh mint being picked to go with freshly dug potatoes for dinner.

First plant love My first and only real plant obsession has been the iris. It started with tall bearded iris and has now expanded to water iris species, which we specialise in at Tor Garden Plants. I love their delicate form and the intricately detailed veining on the falls. The scent of some of the bearded iris is intoxicating.

Gardening as a career change I completed a degree in theatre, film and television, however in my last year at university I started volunteering in a garden to get away from the city environment and realised how happy I was working outdoors. I was never aware until that point that horticulture was even a career option.

Favourite garden that has influenced you I had the pleasure of working at Knightshayes Court for six years and love the garden. I particularly fell for the woodland garden, it is simply magical. I love the combination of manicured garden areas among mature woodland trees with dappled light and views out to the landscape beyond.

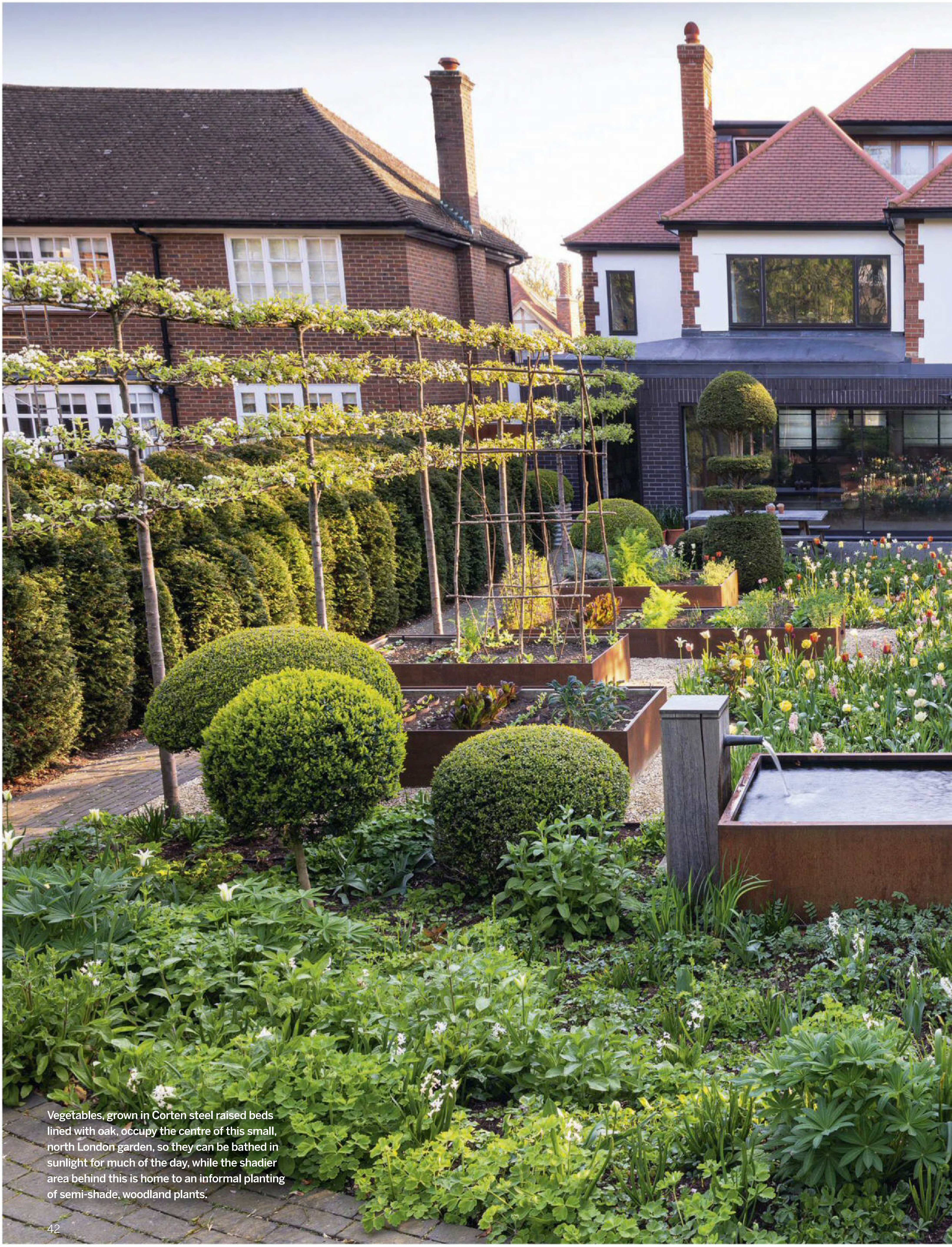
Dream plant destination I have been meaning to visit Monet's Garden, Giverny in France for some time. I admire his paintings of irises and water lilies and the idea of borders full of iris alongside a beautiful water garden sounds like my perfect place.

Biggest challenge facing gardeners today Many horticultural groups and societies are struggling to attract new members and even continue altogether. As a result we are losing so much knowledge and expertise. Plant collections are under threat as people struggle to pass on their collections, resulting in the loss of valuable plants and resources. Societies are great places to connect with other gardeners, share passions for plants and conserve them for the future.

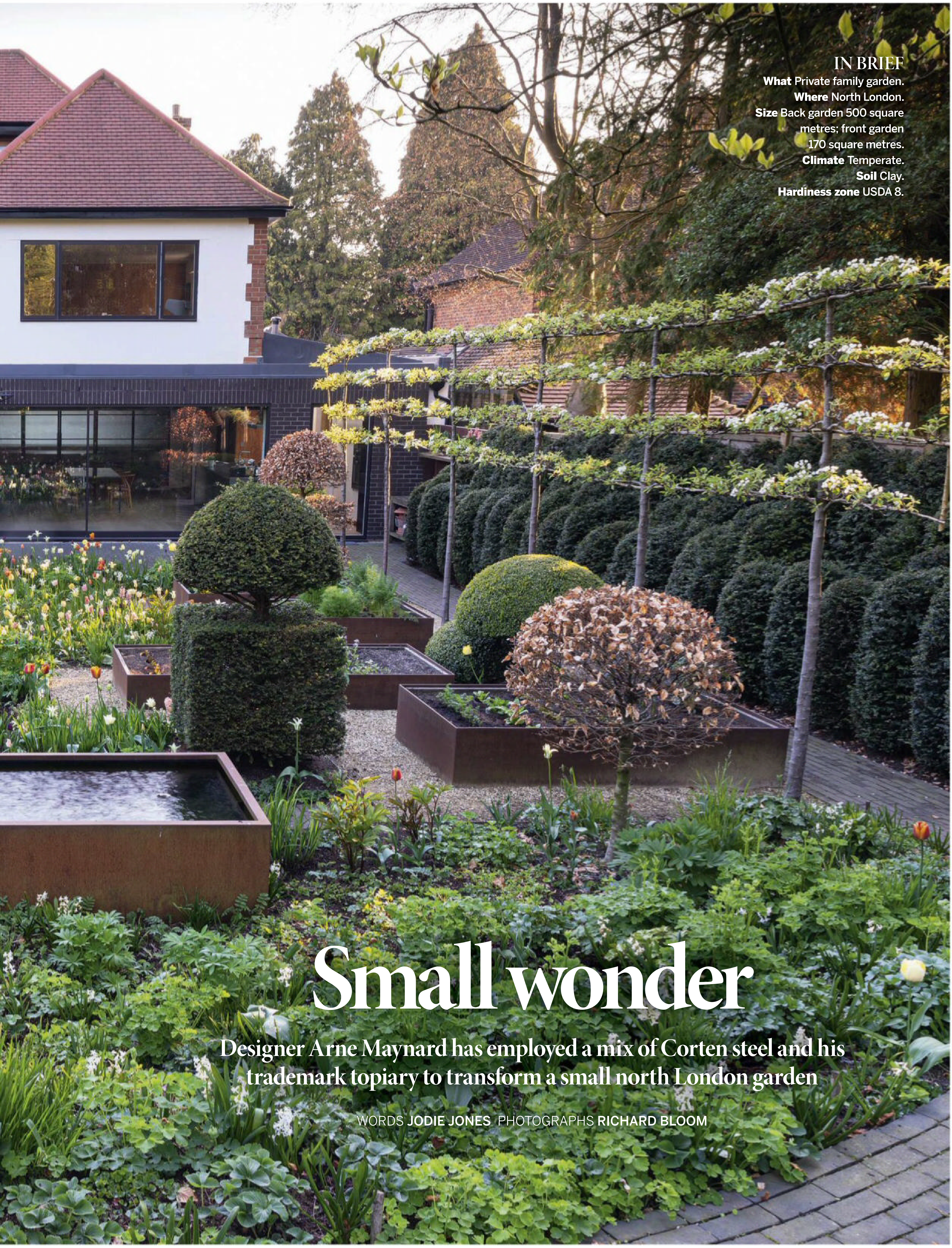
One easy way to garden more sustainably Efficient watering. Checking pots by not only feeling soil but picking them up to feel the weight. Often plants are dry on top but wet beneath the surface. Soaking each plant individually instead of blanket watering over the top will waste less water and also penetrate the pots better.

Next big seasonal task you'll be tackling in the garden We've just cleaned out some of the ponds, which involves waders and waterproofs. We always leave the debris on the side of the pond for 24 hours so any life can crawl back in before we dispose of it.

Further information Emma runs Tor Garden Plants, specialist nursery for water, marginal and moisture-loving plants. torgardenplants.co.uk



Vegetables, grown in Corten steel raised beds lined with oak, occupy the centre of this small, north London garden, so they can be bathed in sunlight for much of the day, while the shadier area behind this is home to an informal planting of semi-shade, woodland plants.



IN BRIEF

What Private family garden.
Where North London.
Size Back garden 500 square metres; front garden 170 square metres.
Climate Temperate.
Soil Clay.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Small wonder

Designer Arne Maynard has employed a mix of Corten steel and his trademark topiary to transform a small north London garden

WORDS **JODIE JONES** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Exquisitely clipped topiary pieces, espaliered fruit trees and well-judged, ornamental planting are vintage Arne Maynard. Yet at the heart of his design for Michael and Susan's north London garden are a series of raised beds for biodynamic vegetables.

Susan is a half Japanese homoeopath with a passion for kitchen gardening and Michael is a native north Londoner. The brief the couple gave to Arne was a short film of the American children's author and illustrator Tasha Tudor in her Vermont cottage garden. It is hard to imagine a more potent mix of cultural influences, and it has resulted in an exceptional garden. The overall impression is of a crisply contemporary city space that complements a radical interior redesign.

In 2015 the couple moved from central London to an Arts and Crafts-style house at the northerly end of the London Underground network, in a quiet street close to the one where Michael grew up. "We wanted a family home for our daughter," says Michael. "I was comfortable managing the construction side of the job, but I didn't know where to start with the garden. In fact, we didn't realise just how important the view of the garden would be until we removed the back of the house and replaced it with a glass-sided extension." By the time Arne first visited the house, the interior had been scooped out and finished in a minimalist style that made the garden the main decorative element of the family living space. "I could immediately see its potential," he says. "Every garden I create is a reflection of the place, the house and the people, and this was no different.

"Because of the large rear windows, this is an inside-outside garden. The house has black brick fireplaces, so we used the same brick out on the terrace. We needed raised beds for vegetables, but oak would have been too rustic so we made them from Corten steel, although they are lined in oak according to biodynamic principles, so the soil doesn't come into contact with metal. Overall, the garden needed enough structure to hold its own throughout the year, while the softer planted elements ebb and flow to mark the passing of the seasons."

Inevitably, there were practical issues to address, as well as aesthetic ones. "City gardens are really complicated," says Arne. "It is so much easier to make a big country garden." The ground sloped up towards its rear boundary and was overwhelmed by a number of large trees. The soil was poor quality and free draining in the higher sections, while the lower part was prone to waterlogging, and although Susan and Michael had set their hearts on an orchard, the aspect was simply not suitable.

Arne solved this with the simple idea of planting it in the front garden instead. Consequently the in-and-out driveway is bordered by gooseberry and currant bushes, as well as clipped yew domes, alchemilla and linaria, and privacy is provided by a stilt hedge of espaliered apples.

To the rear of the house, one large tree was removed, land drains were laid and the soil was extensively improved to give the carefully chosen plant palette the best start in life.

This ornamental planting is layered up seasonally, starting with a groundcover of *Viola odorata* and alpine strawberries that protects the soil from winter erosion. This soon disappears under a tapestry of tulips and other spring bulbs, carefully orchestrated to fill the garden with flowers from late March through to May, by which time *Paeonia* 'Starlight' is in full flower, along with palest lavender-coloured *Iris* 'Berliner Overture' and the long-flowering astrantias 'Buckland' and 'Roma'. Some plants, including witch hazel and lavender, were partially chosen for their homoeopathic benefits. Spires of *Digitalis ferruginea* and *Lupinus* 'Noble Maiden' introduce a vertical accent and the pretty anemones *A.* Dreaming Swan (= 'Macane004') and *A.* Ruffled Swan (= 'Macane007') extend the season well into autumn.

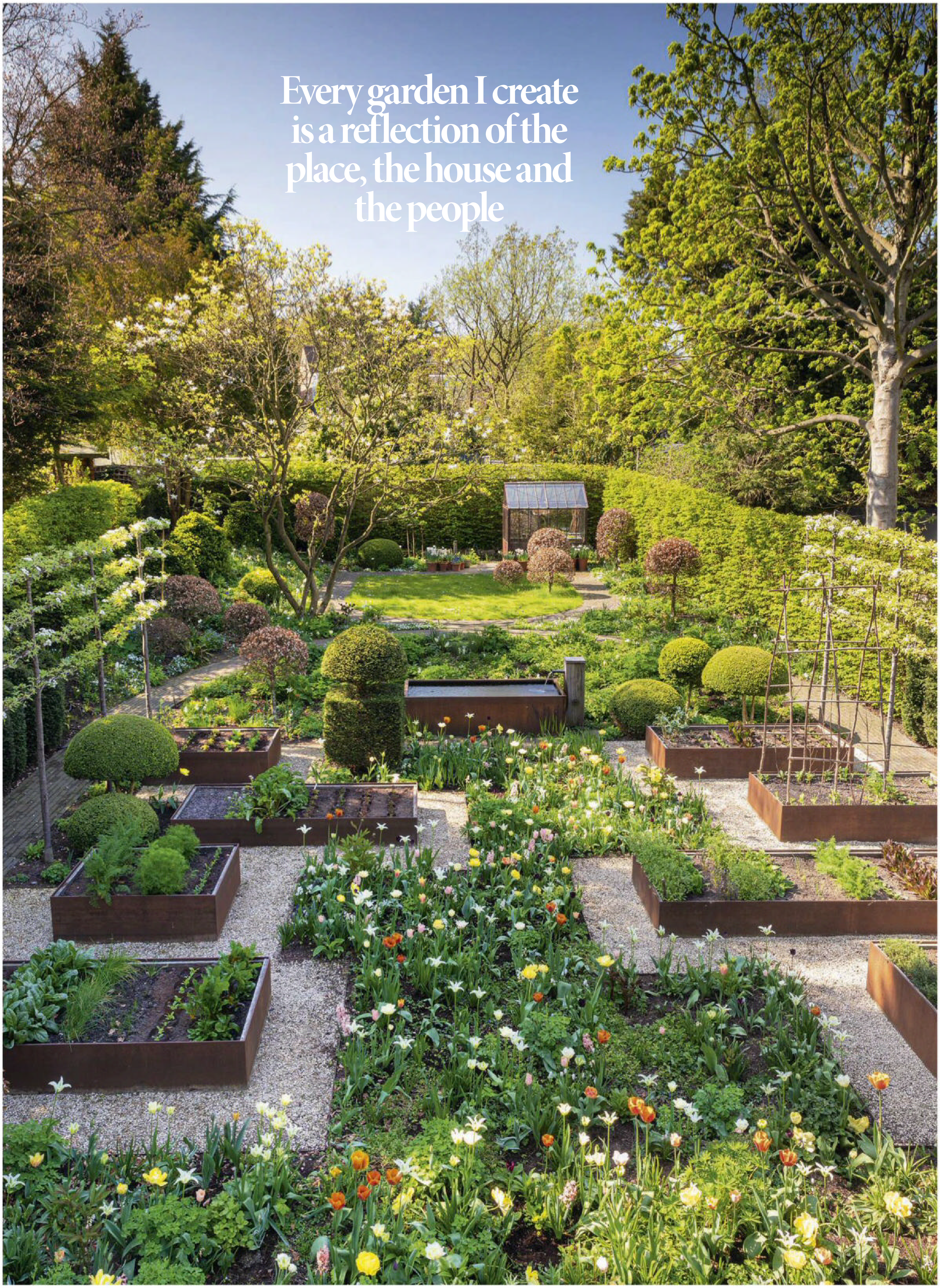
Paths wind up through these flower beds to a little meadow at the end of the garden. "This is not a wildflower meadow as such, because that would look too messy at certain times of year, but it is not cut every week so it can get a little shaggy and informal," says Arne.

The topiary, in contrast, is carefully maintained and Michael is anticipating the day when the cloud-pruned yew hedges get a little heavier. "We already love the garden, but when this hedge is thicker it will improve the proportions even more." With clients as committed to fine detail as the designer himself, it is no wonder this garden is as good as it is. □

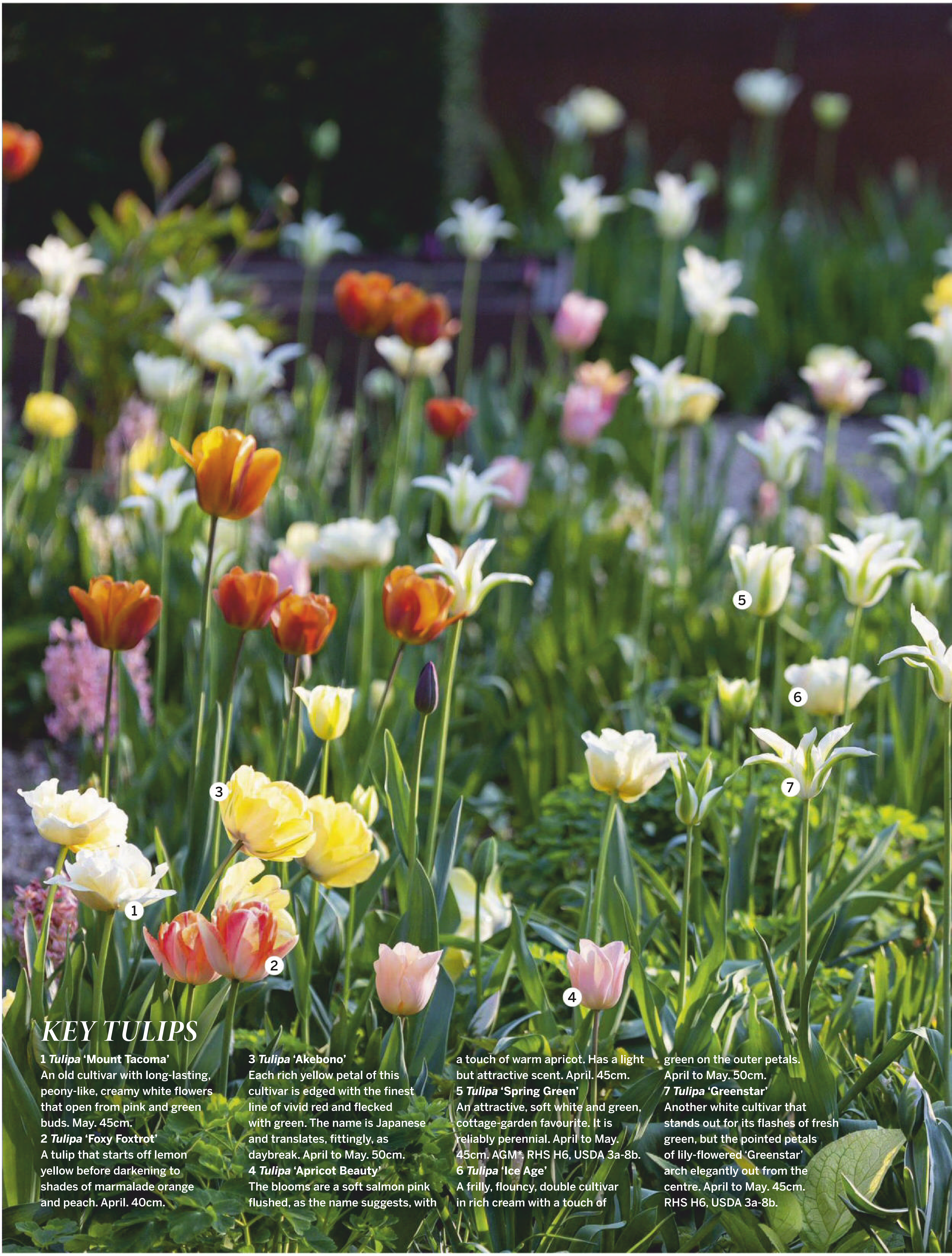
USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Arne's work and courses at **arnemaynard.com**

Right Although the garden is only 33m long, Arne has created several distinctive areas, including an informal meadow at the far end, and the asymmetrically placed raised beds, surrounding beds of soft planting, create several winding paths through the garden, lengthening the journey and making the garden seem larger than it is. Symmetrical rows of formally trained pleached 'Doyenné du Comice' pears add some vertical structure and much needed privacy, while also adding a sense of enclosure – similar to the feeling of a walled garden.



Every garden I create is a reflection of the place, the house and the people



KEY TULIPS

1 *Tulipa* 'Mount Tacoma'
An old cultivar with long-lasting, peony-like, creamy white flowers that open from pink and green buds. May. 45cm.

2 *Tulipa* 'Foxy Foxtrot'
A tulip that starts off lemon yellow before darkening to shades of marmalade orange and peach. April. 40cm.

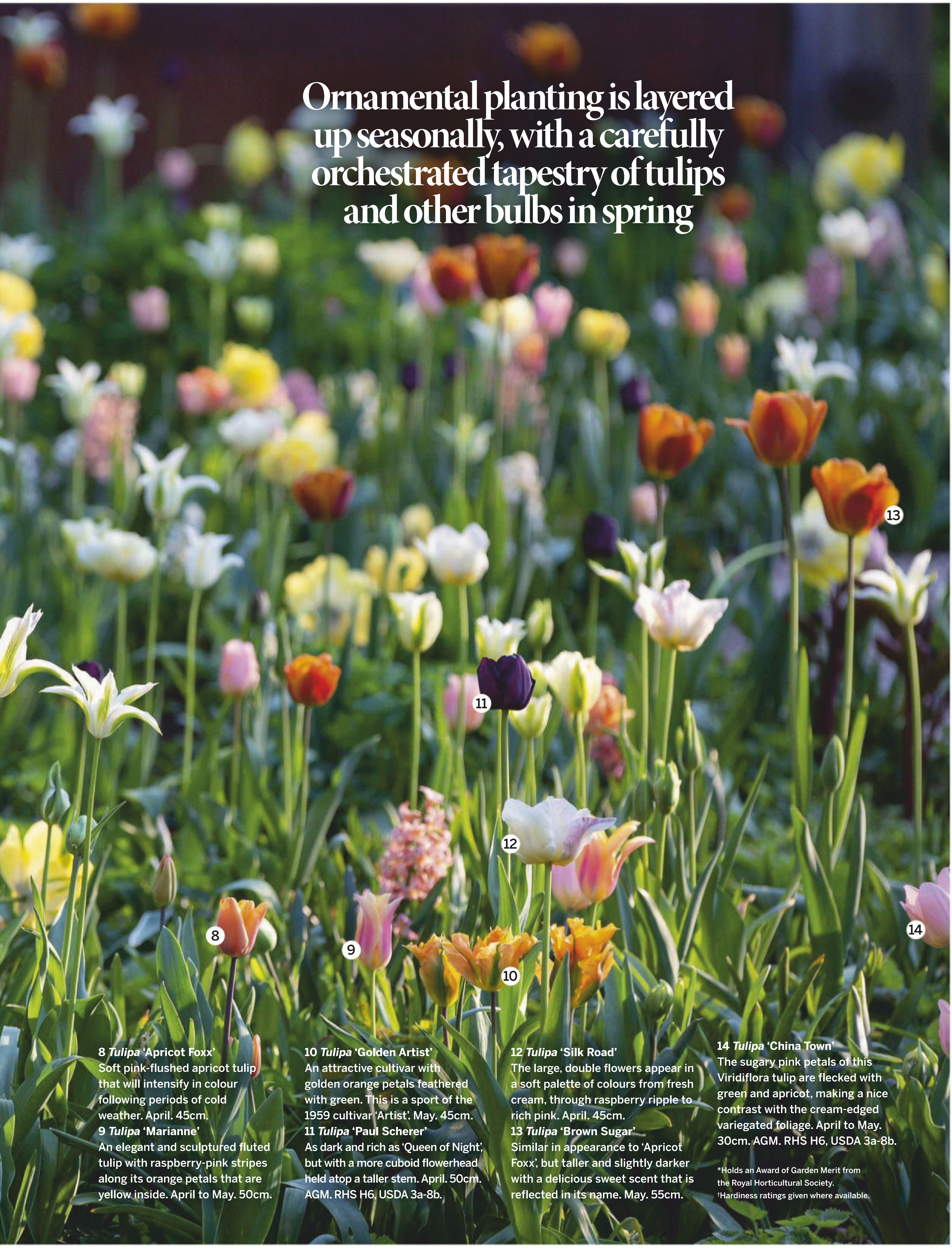
3 *Tulipa* 'Akebono'
Each rich yellow petal of this cultivar is edged with the finest line of vivid red and flecked with green. The name is Japanese and translates, fittingly, as daybreak. April to May. 50cm.

4 *Tulipa* 'Apricot Beauty'
The blooms are a soft salmon pink flushed, as the name suggests, with a touch of warm apricot. Has a light but attractive scent. April. 45cm.

5 *Tulipa* 'Spring Green'
An attractive, soft white and green, cottage-garden favourite. It is reliably perennial. April to May. 45cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *Tulipa* 'Ice Age'
A frilly, flouncy, double cultivar in rich cream with a touch of green on the outer petals. April to May. 50cm.

7 *Tulipa* 'Greenstar'
Another white cultivar that stands out for its flashes of fresh green, but the pointed petals of lily-flowered 'Greenstar' arch elegantly out from the centre. April to May. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.



Ornamental planting is layered up seasonally, with a carefully orchestrated tapestry of tulips and other bulbs in spring

8 *Tulipa* 'Apricot Foxx'
Soft pink-flushed apricot tulip that will intensify in colour following periods of cold weather. April. 45cm.

9 *Tulipa* 'Marianne'
An elegant and sculptured fluted tulip with raspberry-pink stripes along its orange petals that are yellow inside. April to May. 50cm.

10 *Tulipa* 'Golden Artist'
An attractive cultivar with golden orange petals feathered with green. This is a sport of the 1959 cultivar 'Artist'. May. 45cm.

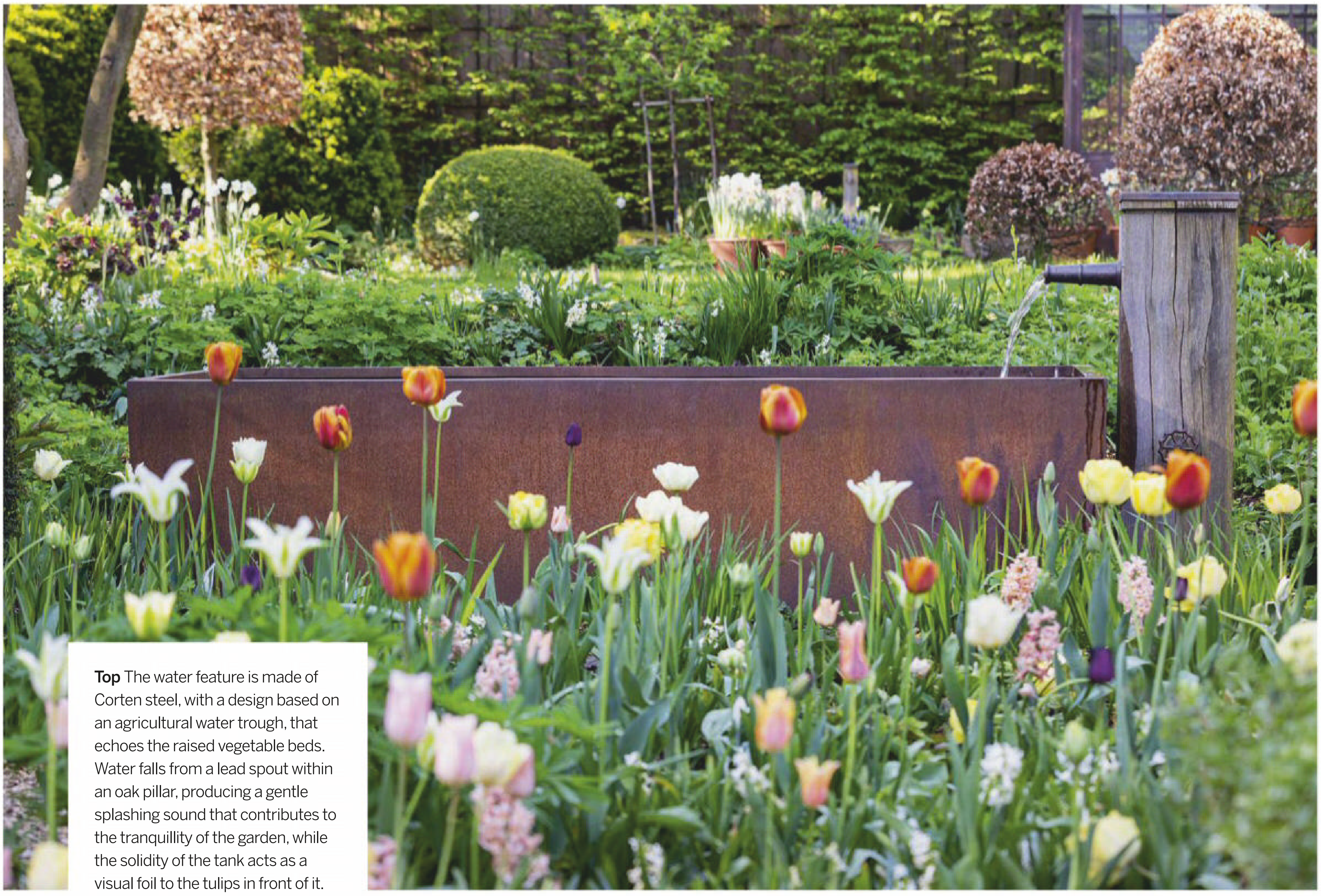
11 *Tulipa* 'Paul Scherer'
As dark and rich as 'Queen of Night', but with a more cuboid flowerhead held atop a taller stem. April. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

12 *Tulipa* 'Silk Road'
The large, double flowers appear in a soft palette of colours from fresh cream, through raspberry ripple to rich pink. April. 45cm.

13 *Tulipa* 'Brown Sugar'
Similar in appearance to 'Apricot Foxx', but taller and slightly darker with a delicious sweet scent that is reflected in its name. May. 55cm.

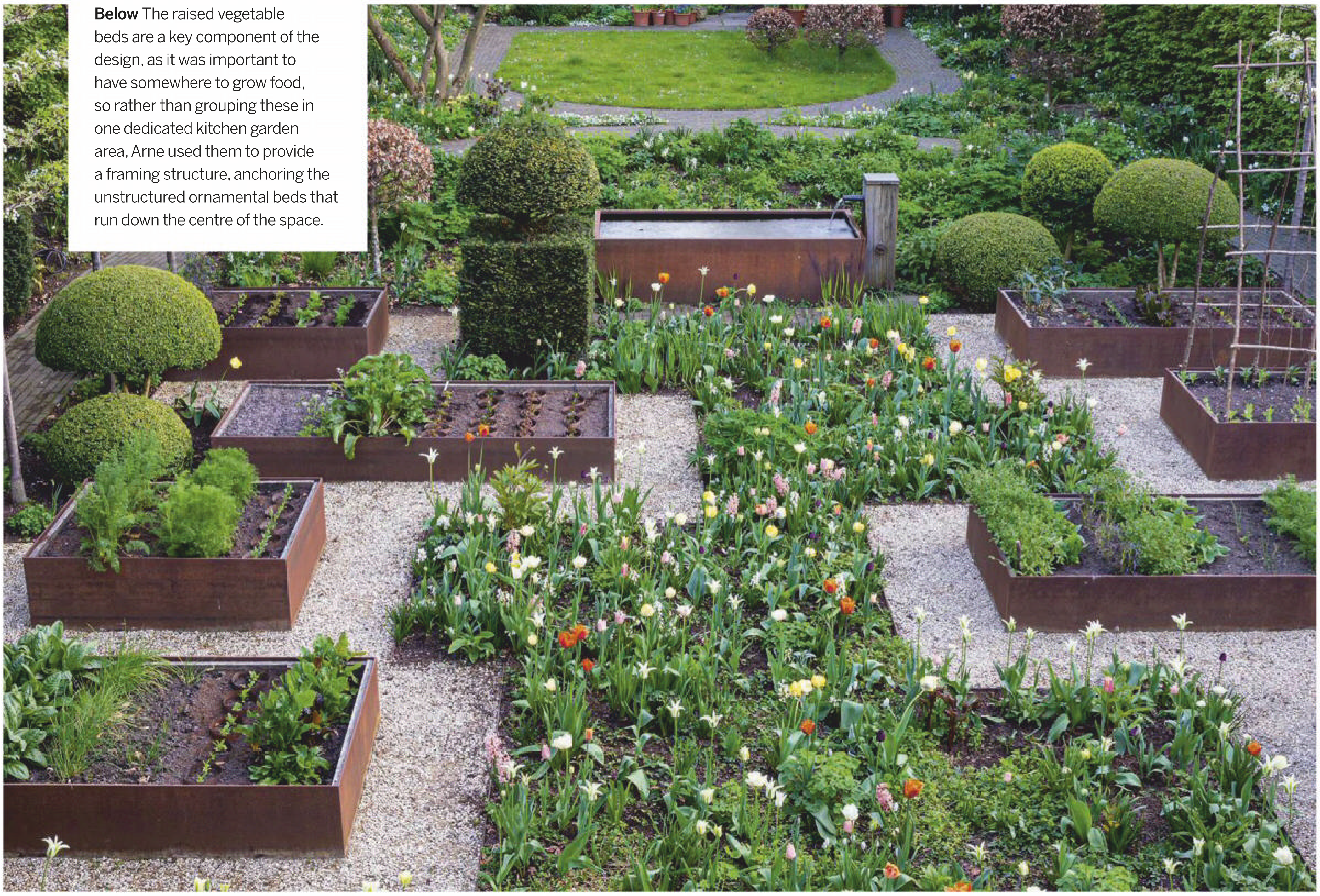
14 *Tulipa* 'China Town'
The sugary pink petals of this Viridiflora tulip are flecked with green and apricot, making a nice contrast with the cream-edged variegated foliage. April to May. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

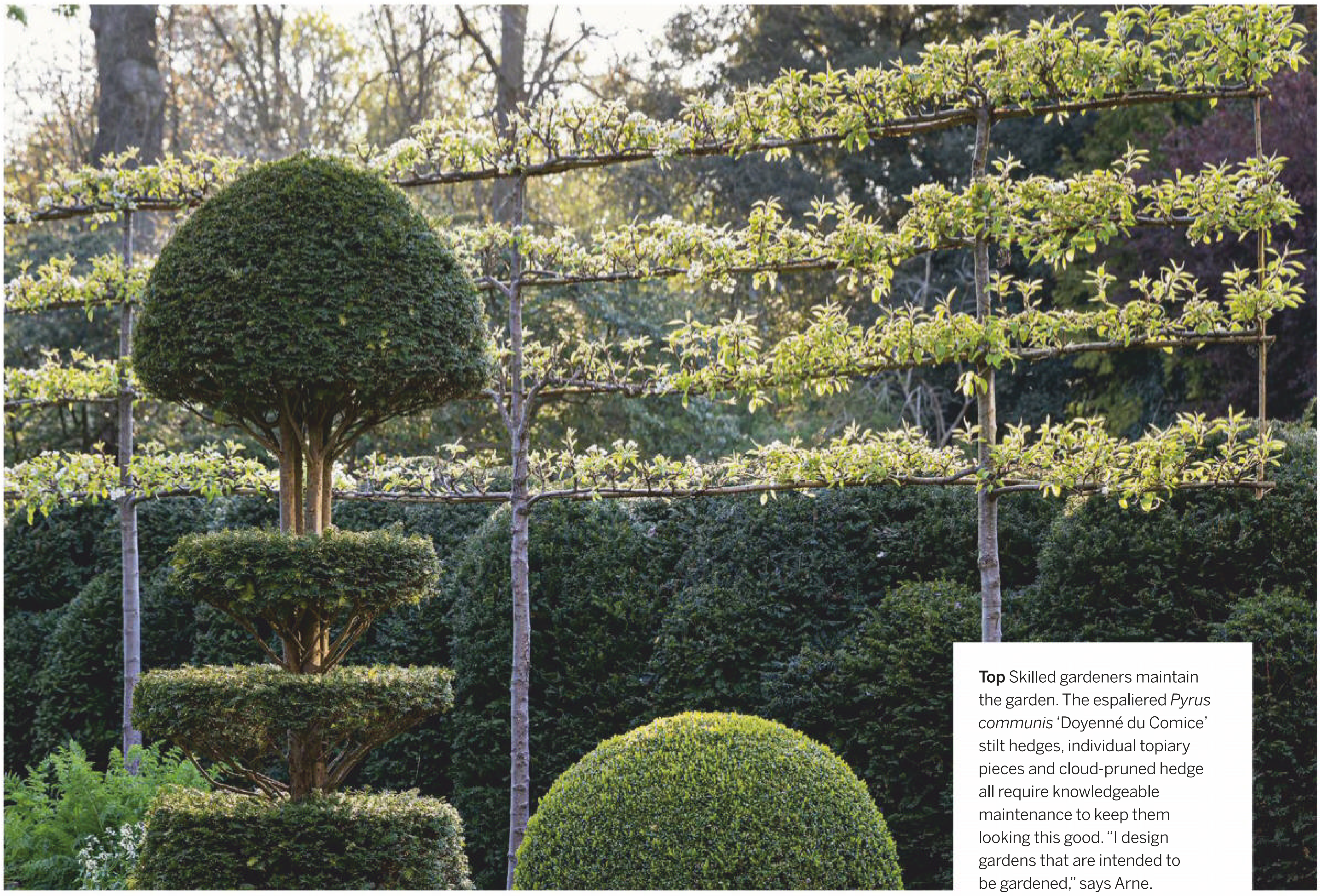
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.



Top The water feature is made of Corten steel, with a design based on an agricultural water trough, that echoes the raised vegetable beds. Water falls from a lead spout within an oak pillar, producing a gentle splashing sound that contributes to the tranquillity of the garden, while the solidity of the tank acts as a visual foil to the tulips in front of it.

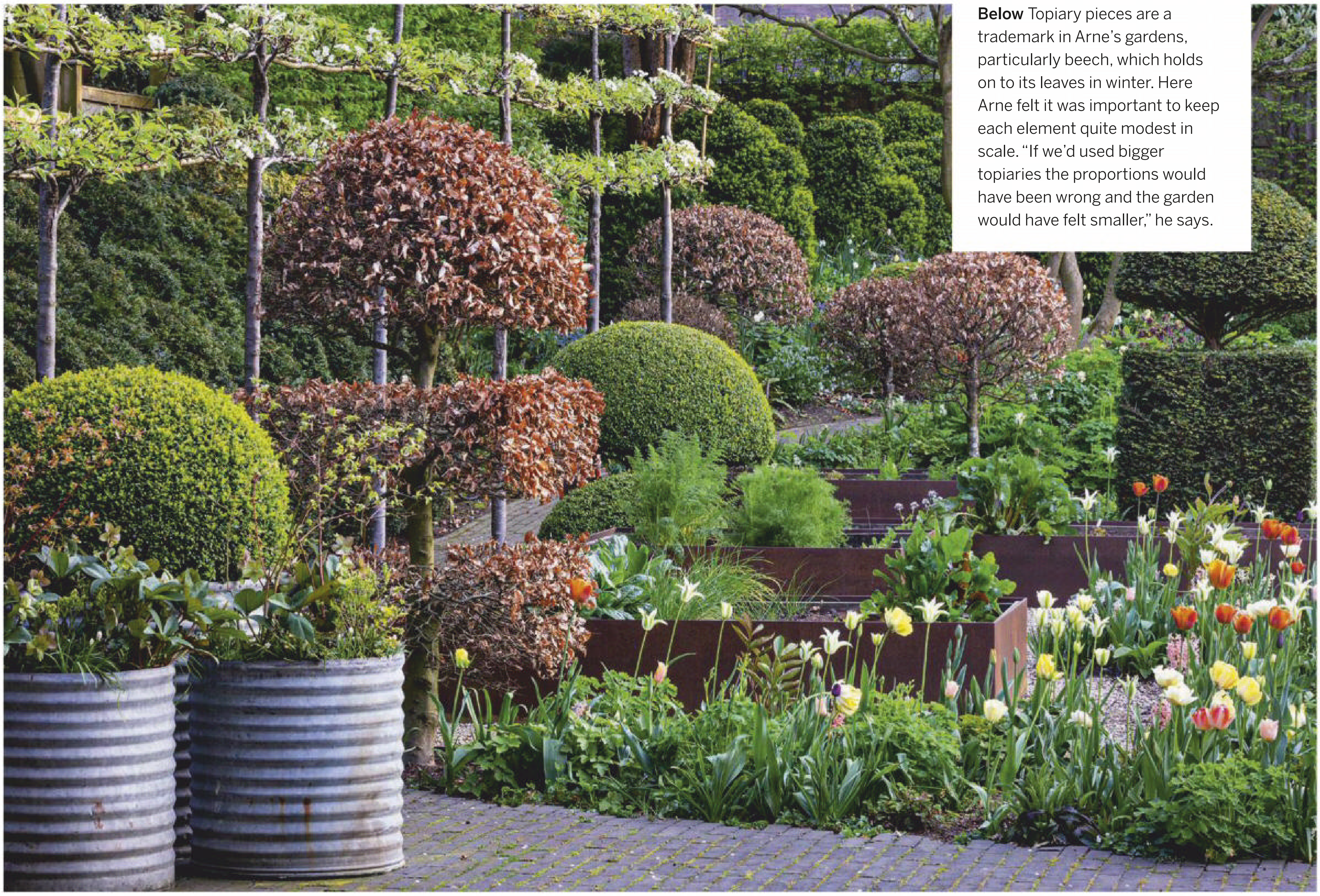
Below The raised vegetable beds are a key component of the design, as it was important to have somewhere to grow food, so rather than grouping these in one dedicated kitchen garden area, Arne used them to provide a framing structure, anchoring the unstructured ornamental beds that run down the centre of the space.

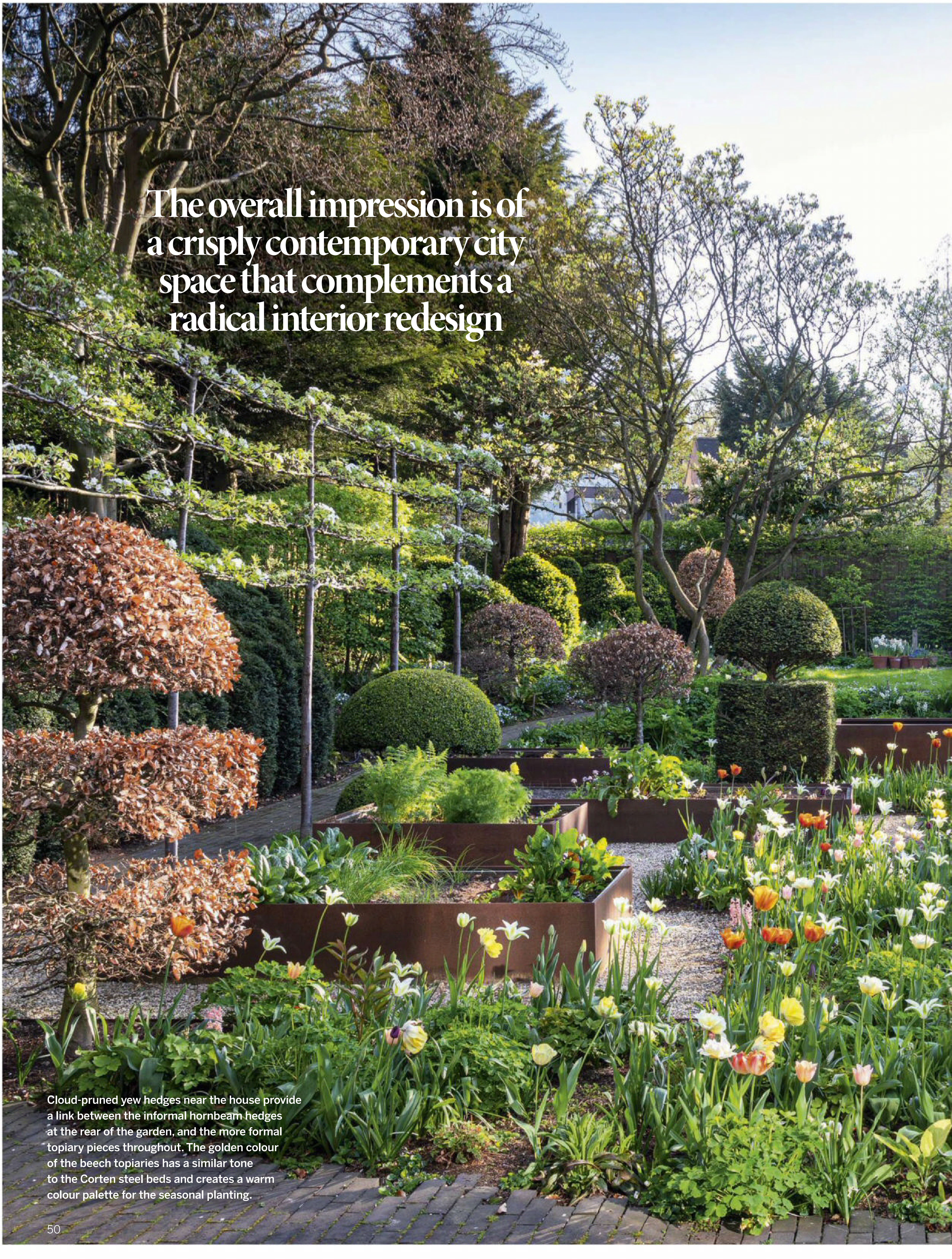




Top Skilled gardeners maintain the garden. The espaliered *Pyrus communis* 'Doyenné du Comice' stilt hedges, individual topiary pieces and cloud-pruned hedge all require knowledgeable maintenance to keep them looking this good. "I design gardens that are intended to be gardened," says Arne.

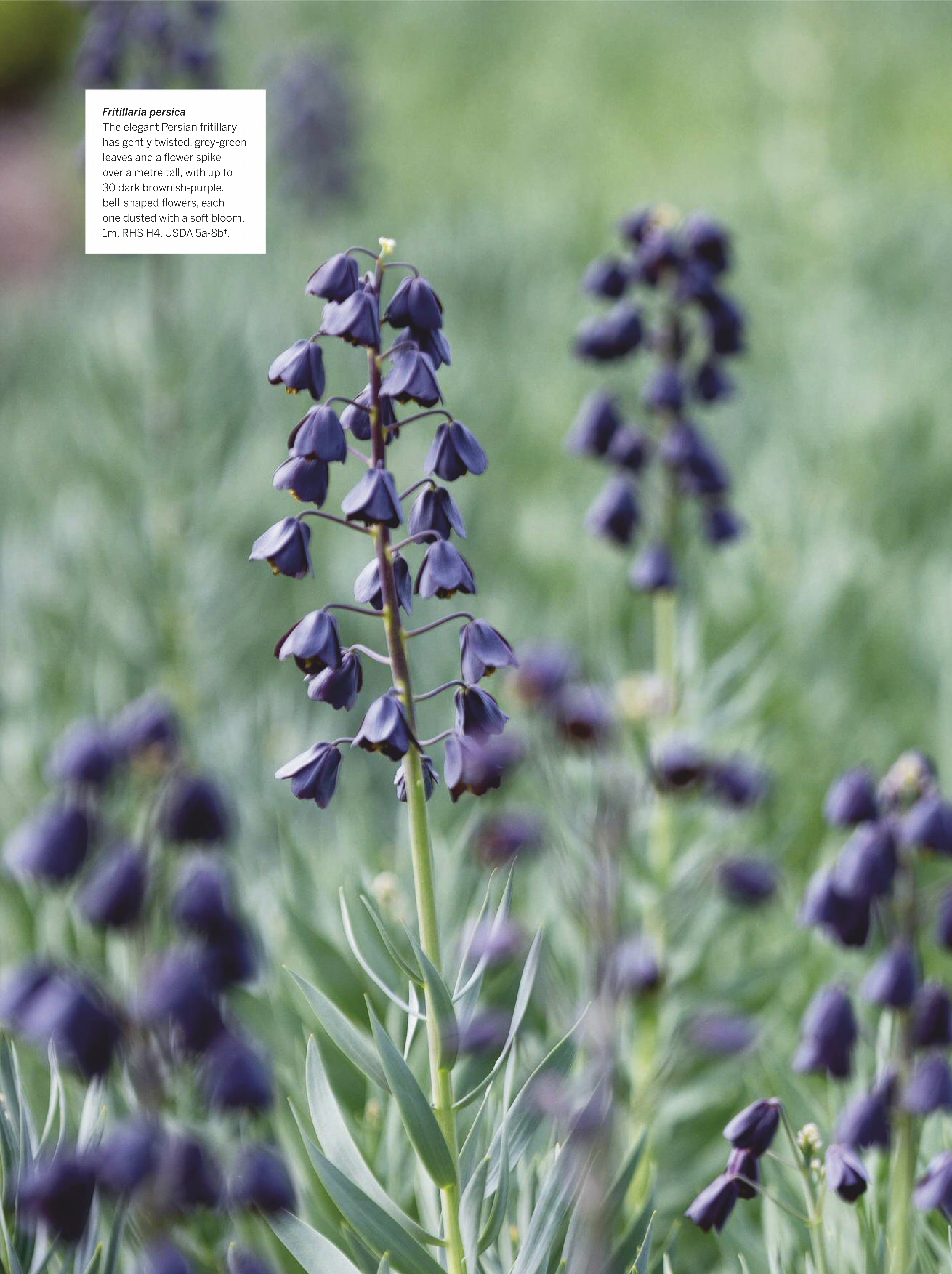
Below Topiary pieces are a trademark in Arne's gardens, particularly beech, which holds on to its leaves in winter. Here Arne felt it was important to keep each element quite modest in scale. "If we'd used bigger topiaries the proportions would have been wrong and the garden would have felt smaller," he says.





The overall impression is of a crisply contemporary city space that complements a radical interior redesign

Cloud-pruned yew hedges near the house provide a link between the informal hornbeam hedges at the rear of the garden, and the more formal topiary pieces throughout. The golden colour of the beech topiaries has a similar tone to the Corten steel beds and creates a warm colour palette for the seasonal planting.



Fritillaria persica
The elegant Persian fritillary has gently twisted, grey-green leaves and a flower spike over a metre tall, with up to 30 dark brownish-purple, bell-shaped flowers, each one dusted with a soft bloom. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 5a-8b[†].

FRITILLARIA

Often overlooked in favour of more bold spring-flowering bulbs, fritillaries come in many guises from the subtle and intriguing to the dramatic and beguiling

WORDS **RICHARD WILFORD** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

Among the cacophony of spring bulbs, the delicate fritillaries can go unnoticed. The more subdued forms might not stand out from the crowd but they're worth a closer look. Kneel down beside a clump and with your finger, gently lift one of the pendent, bell-shaped blooms to reveal the intricate pattern inside. The outside of the flower may be muddy green, brown or muted purple but inside the colours are strong and glossy, leading to a cluster of nectaries at the base.

Not all fritillaries are so shy, the main exception is the impressive crown imperial, *Fritillaria imperialis*. Its leafy stem can reach over a metre in height and is topped with a cluster of large, pendent flowers in shades of orange or yellow. Not surprisingly, there is an expanding range of cultivars available, some with deep-orange to almost red flowers. Yellow *Fritillaria imperialis* 'Lutea' is one of the oldest and most reliable cultivars. 'The Premier' is a good orange form and 'William Rex' has bronzy, orange-red flowers.

There are around 170 species of *Fritillaria*, found across the Northern Hemisphere. They are bulbous plants that grow in a variety of habitats. The crown imperial, from rocky ground in the mountains of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and the western Himalayas, has been cultivated in Europe for more than 350 years. The European *Fritillaria meleagris* is another familiar garden plant that grows wild in damp meadows, most famously around Magdalen College, Oxford. It is commonly known as the snake's head fritillary for the scale-like chequered pattern on the petals. This pattern has also been compared to the markings on a Roman dice box and the name *Fritillaria* comes from *fritillus*, the Latin for dice box. *Fritillaria meleagris* has plum flowers but also comes in white. The best plantings have a mixture of both colours in a swathe through fresh green grass, their hanging bells silently quivering in the breeze.

Fritillaries from further south prefer drier conditions, particularly in summer when they are dormant. Given plenty of sunshine and free-draining soil, many will happily grow outside in the garden, including the pretty, short-stemmed *F. davisii* and taller *F. messanensis*. These both have greenish or purplish bells, sometimes lightly chequered. Even taller, growing to 40cm or more, is *F. pyrenaica*, from the Pyrenees. It is suited to lightly dappled shade and is vigorous enough to do well in a border, displaying greenish-brown, chequered flowers that are yellow inside. Tallest of all is Turkish *F. persica*, which has spires of 20 or more flowers reaching up to 1.5m. The flowers are usually purple but there are greenish-white forms. It rivals *F. imperialis* in dramatic impact, and can be grown in a sunny border, pushing through newly emerging perennials in spring.

One of the easiest garden species, *F. acmopetala*, from the eastern Mediterranean, has solitary flowers of pale green, with flashes of deep reddish purple, particularly on the inner three petals. *F. elwesii* is similar in form and colour but the flowers are longer and narrower and there can be up to three per stem. The most eye-catching species is *F. michailovskyi*, with broadly bell-shaped, dark brownish-purple flowers, the flared tips dipped in golden yellow. It reaches just 20cm. Twice as tall is the easily grown *F. uva-vulpis*, with yellow-tipped, dusky purple, almond-shaped flowers.

Robust *F. pallidiflora* has up to six boxy flowers in creamy green that combine with the wide glaucous leaves to create a ghostly form in a partially shaded border. It adds lightness to a dull corner, unlike the darkest species, *F. camschatcensis*, which has dark, almost black flowers in its best forms. It is a dramatic and captivating plant for a cool spot in the garden.

If you want some relief from the ubiquity of daffodils and tulips in spring, it may be time to give these beguiling fritillaries a second glance. □

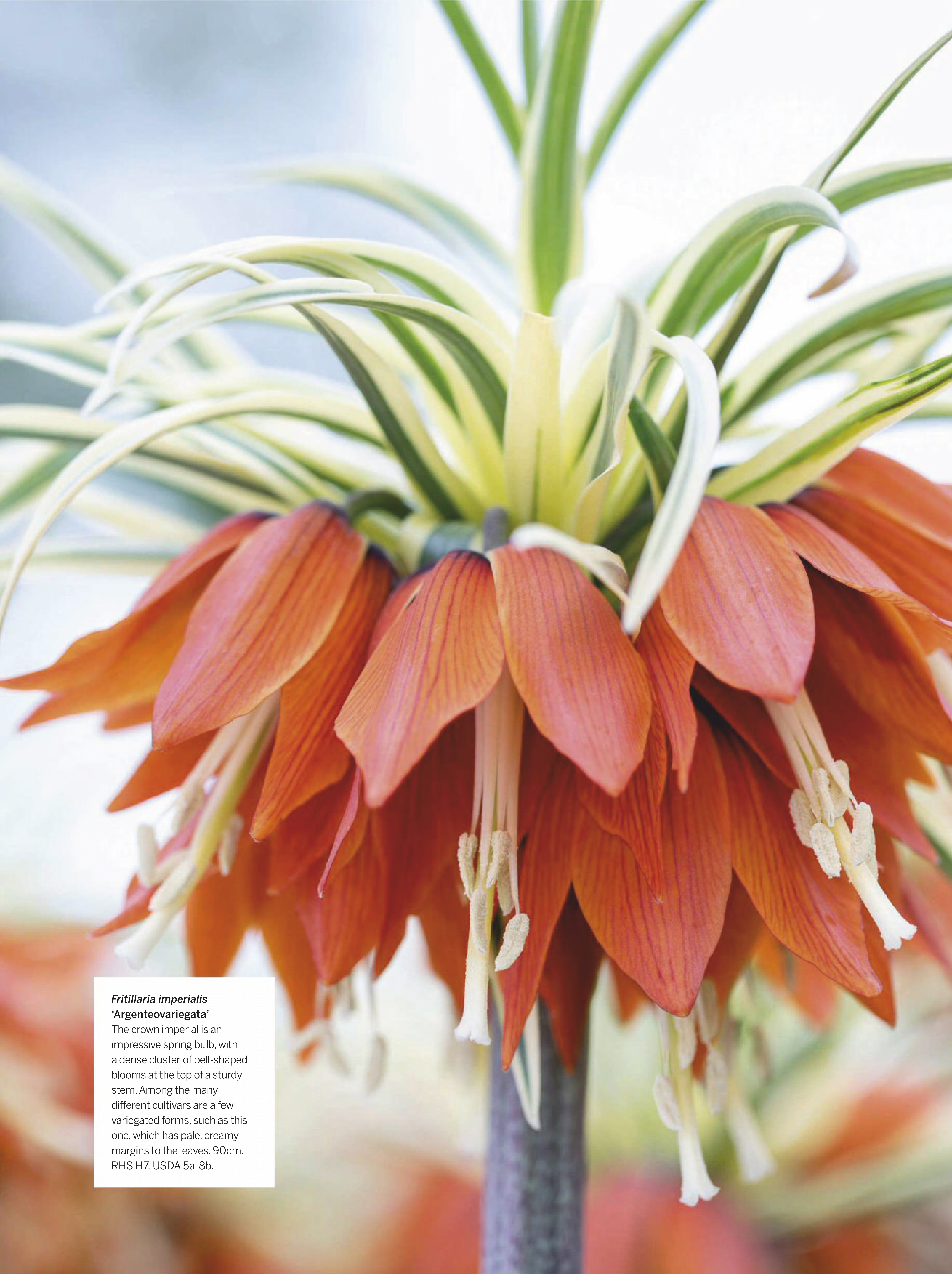
PLANT PROFILE

What A genus of summer-dormant, bulbous plants with around 170 species. Leafy stems hold bell-shaped flowers in spring.
Origins Found across the Northern Hemisphere, mostly in areas with a dry summer climate.
Season Flowers in spring.
Size 10cm to 1.5m tall.
Conditions Can be grown in sun or dappled shade in free-draining soil, although some need more moisture than others. All are dormant in summer, when they shouldn't be in waterlogged ground.
Hardiness Most fritillaries are very hardy, surviving temperatures well below -10°C with RHS ratings ranging from H7 to H4, and are suitable for gardens in USDA zones 5a to 8b.

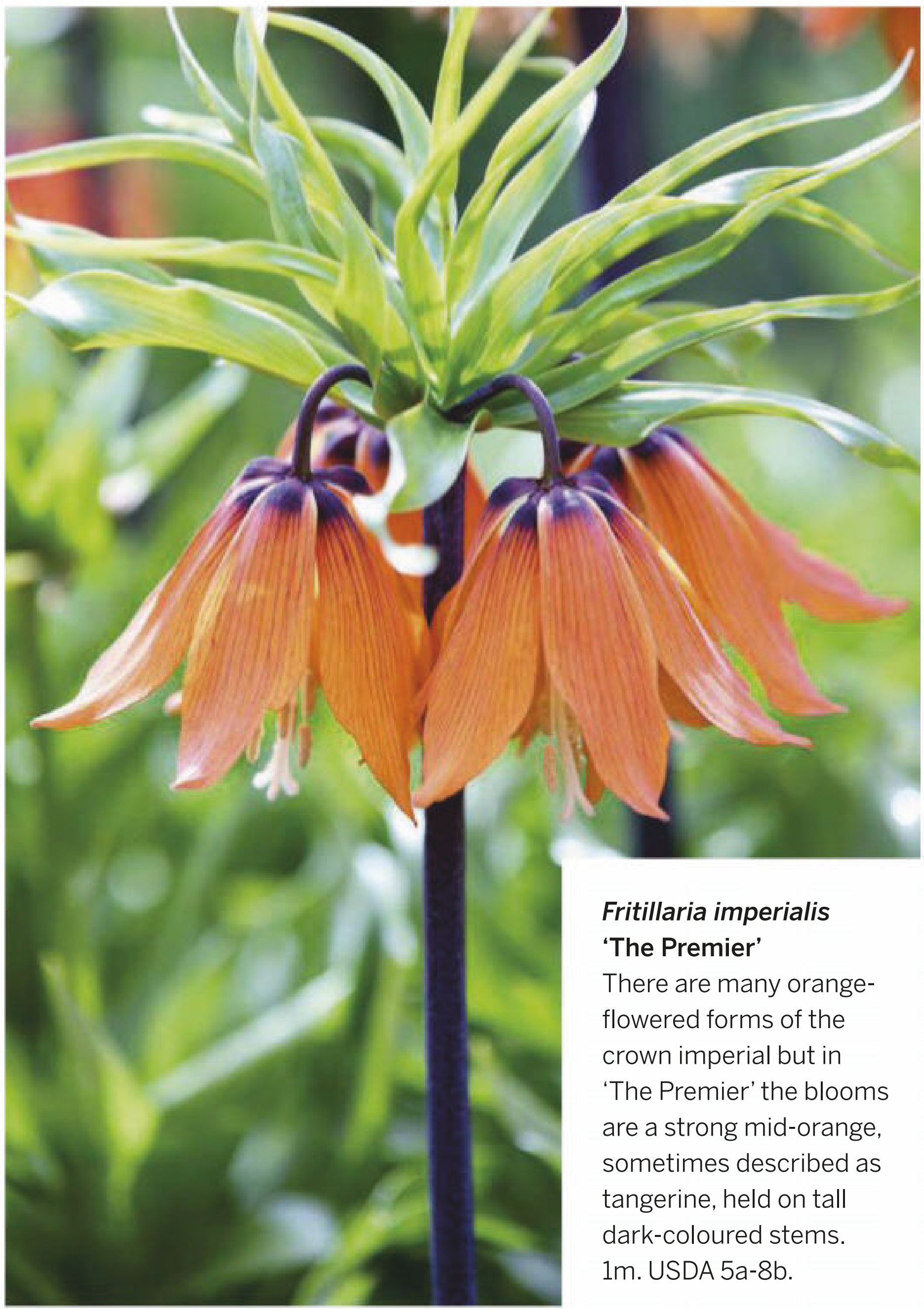
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

Hortus Bulborum
Founded in 1928, Hortus Bulborum in the Netherlands, where most of these images were taken, is a museum garden that holds around 4,000 spring-flowering historical bulbs. Although the collection consists primarily of tulips, narcissus and hyacinths, there is a small number of fritillaries and crocuses.
hortus-bulborum.nl/english

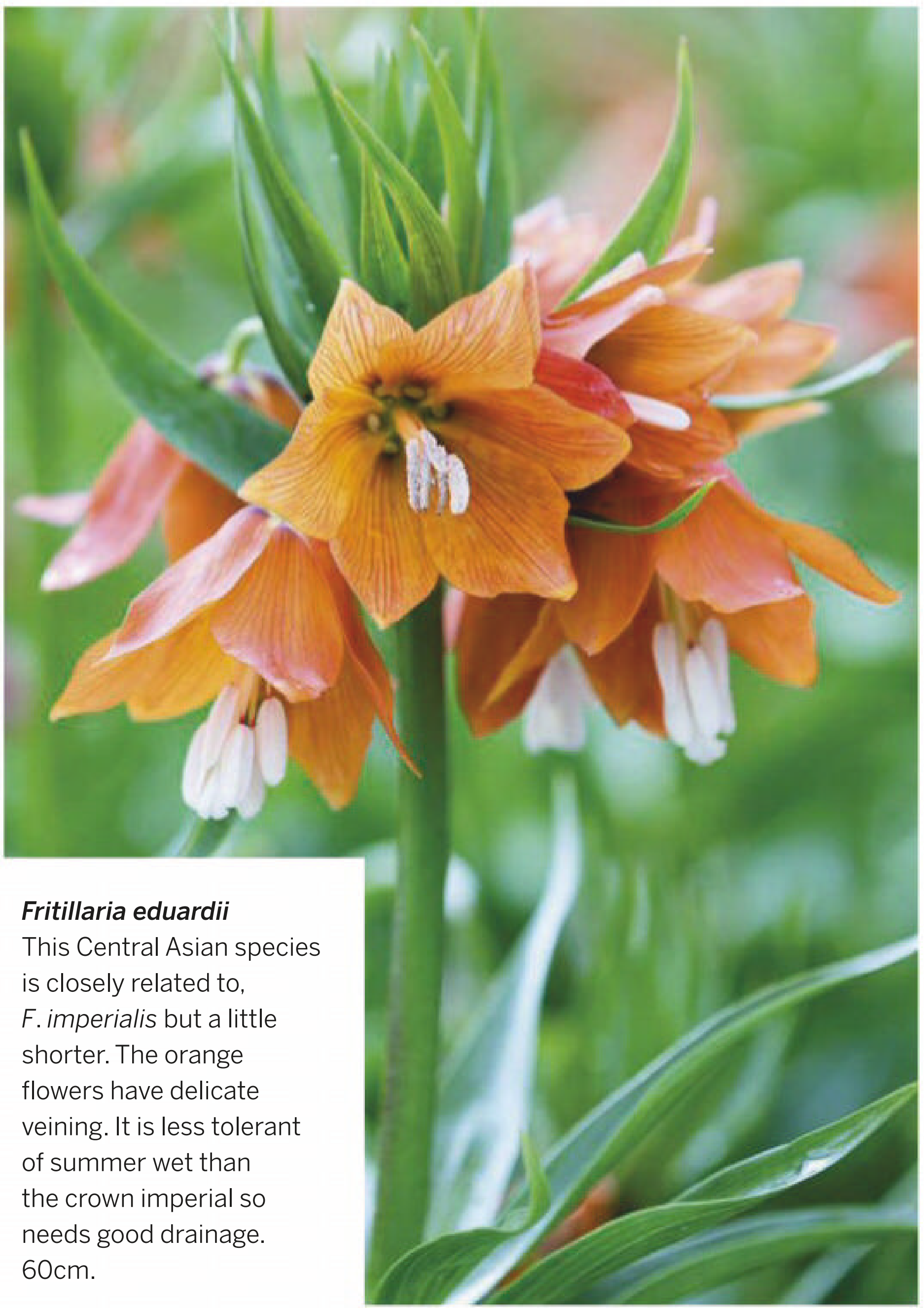
• Author Richard Wilford is head of garden design and collection support at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. His recommendations for fritillaries continue over the next five pages.



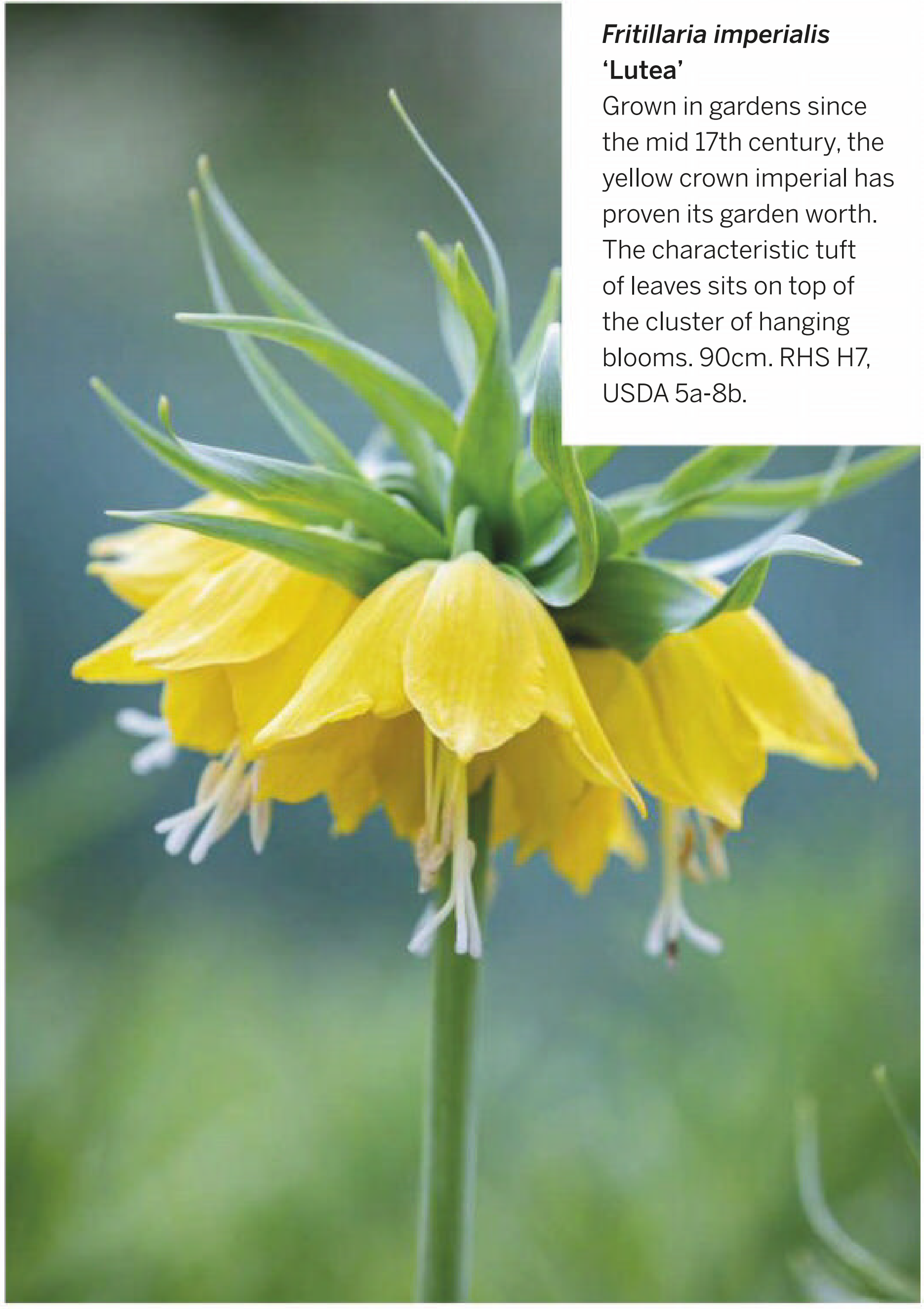
Fritillaria imperialis
'Argenteovariegata'
The crown imperial is an impressive spring bulb, with a dense cluster of bell-shaped blooms at the top of a sturdy stem. Among the many different cultivars are a few variegated forms, such as this one, which has pale, creamy margins to the leaves. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.



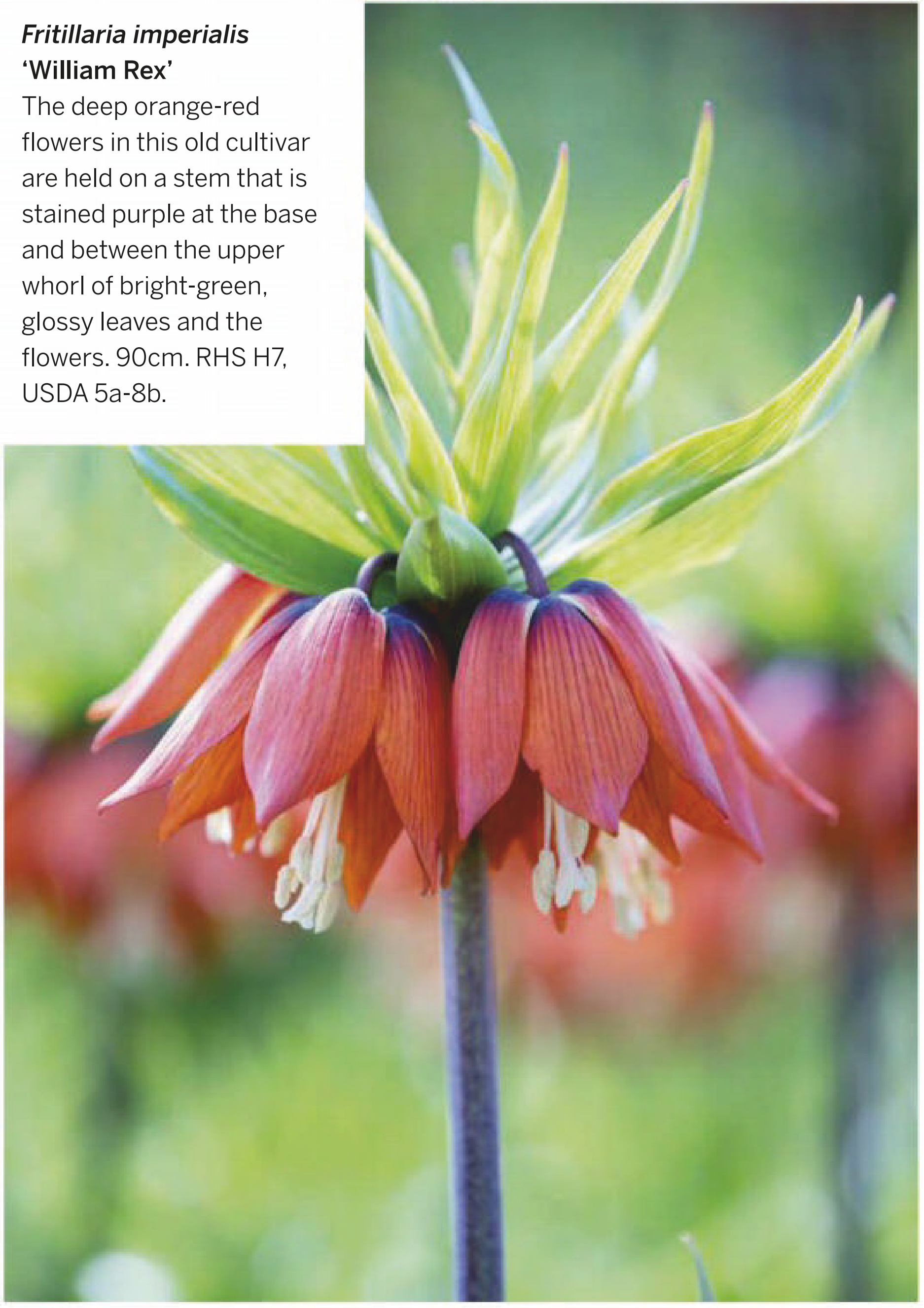
***Fritillaria imperialis* 'The Premier'**
There are many orange-flowered forms of the crown imperial but in 'The Premier' the blooms are a strong mid-orange, sometimes described as tangerine, held on tall dark-coloured stems. 1m. USDA 5a-8b.



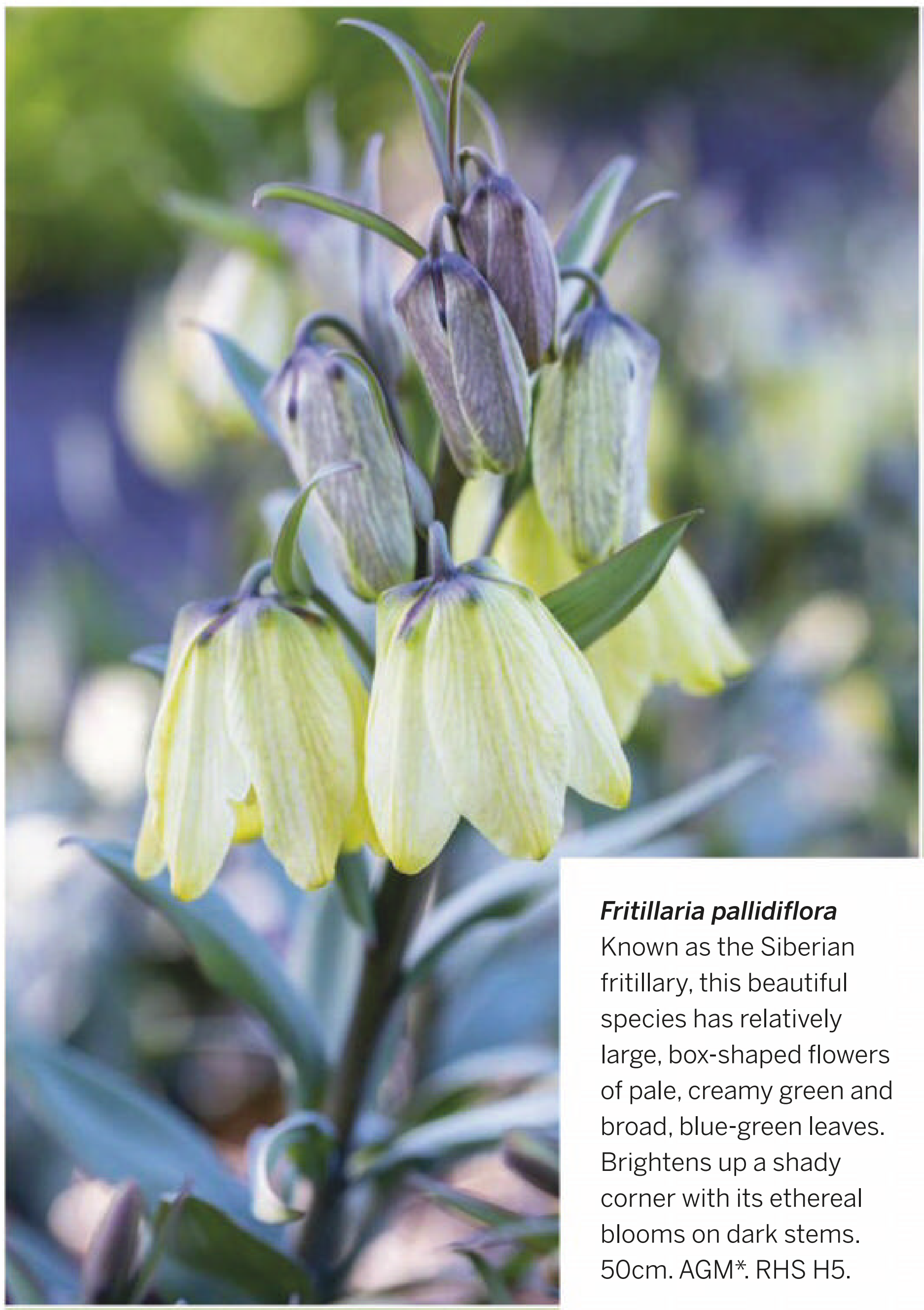
Fritillaria eduardii
This Central Asian species is closely related to, *F. imperialis* but a little shorter. The orange flowers have delicate veining. It is less tolerant of summer wet than the crown imperial so needs good drainage. 60cm.

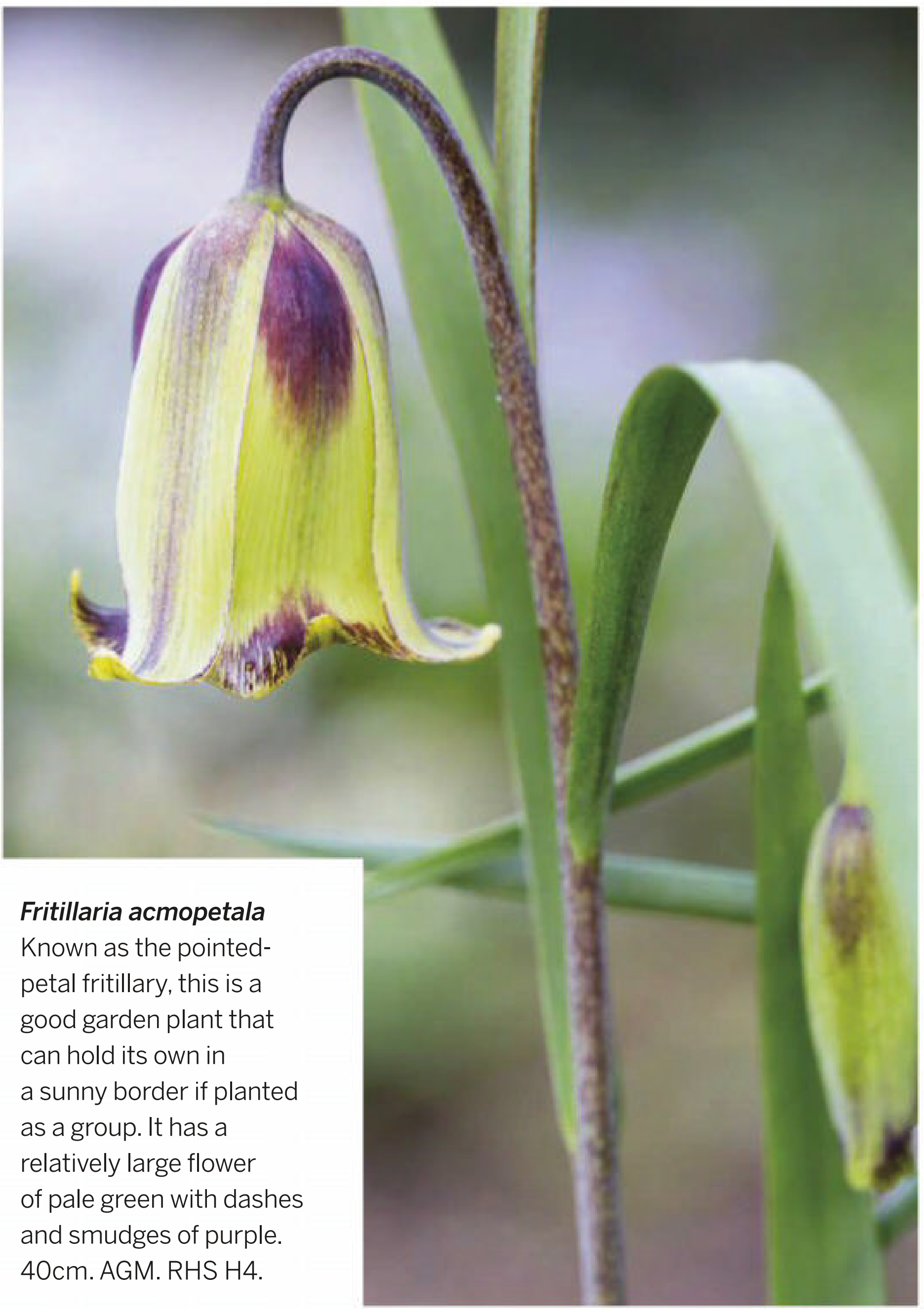


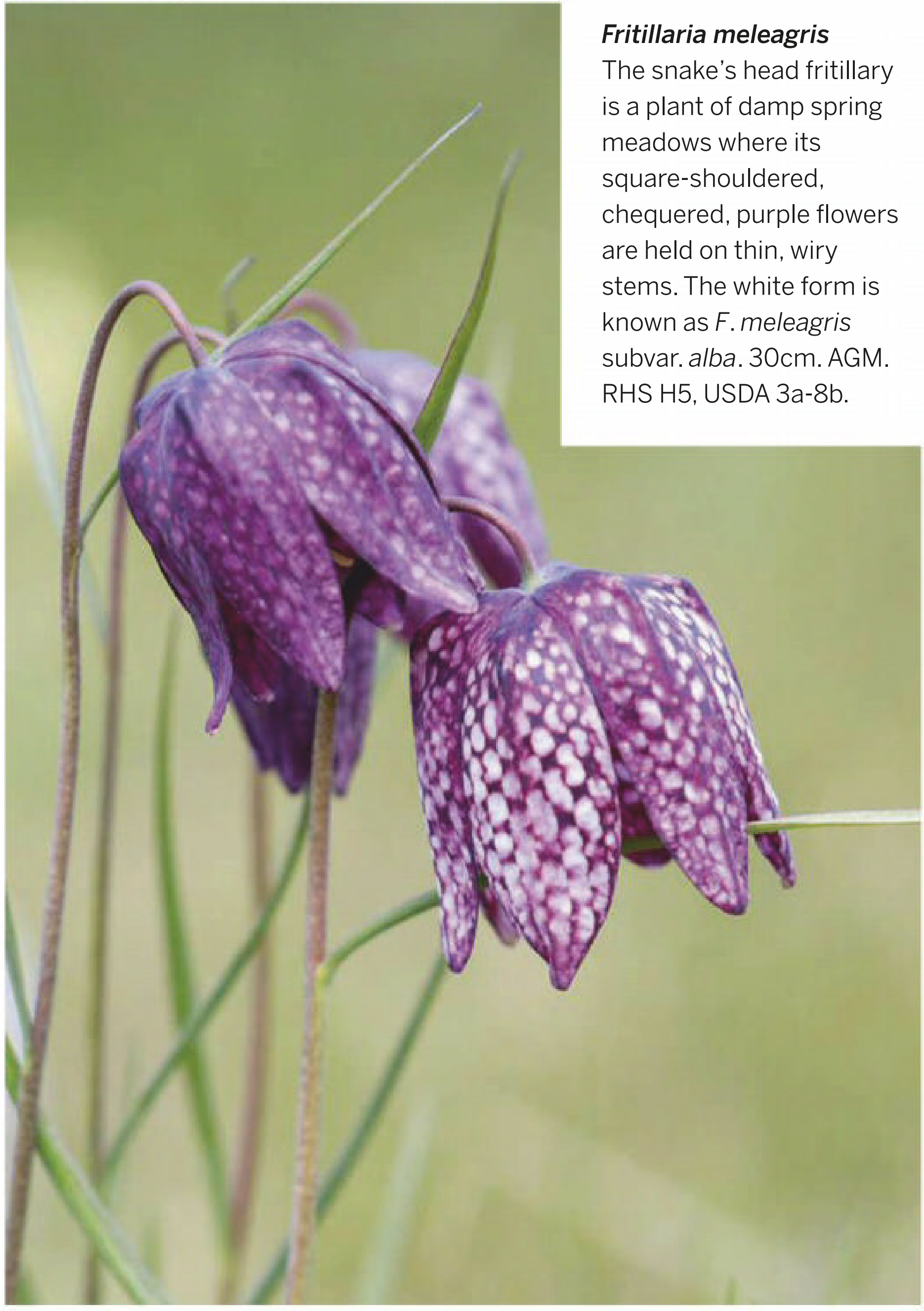
***Fritillaria imperialis* 'Lutea'**
Grown in gardens since the mid 17th century, the yellow crown imperial has proven its garden worth. The characteristic tuft of leaves sits on top of the cluster of hanging blooms. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

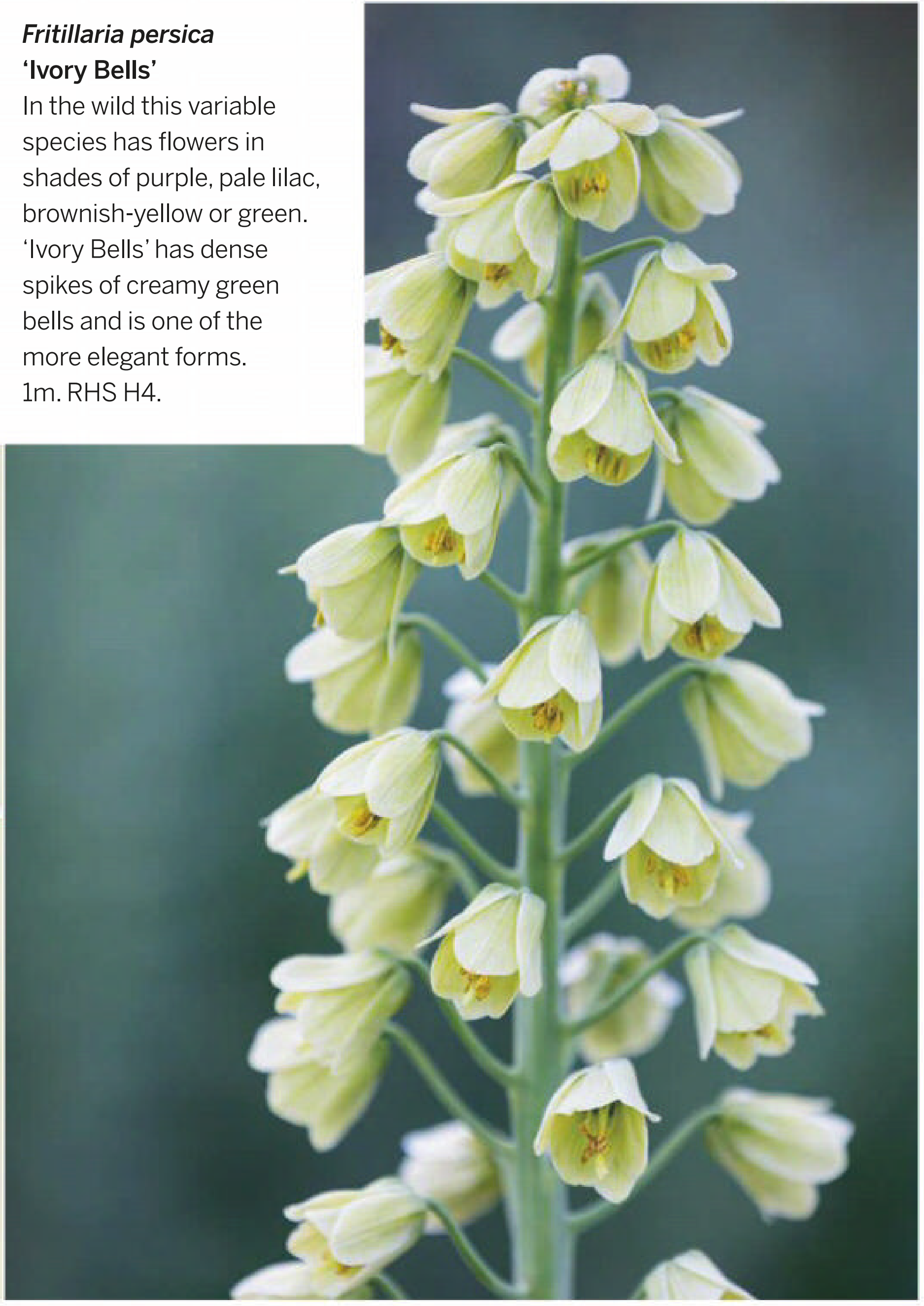


***Fritillaria imperialis* 'William Rex'**
The deep orange-red flowers in this old cultivar are held on a stem that is stained purple at the base and between the upper whorl of bright-green, glossy leaves and the flowers. 90cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.







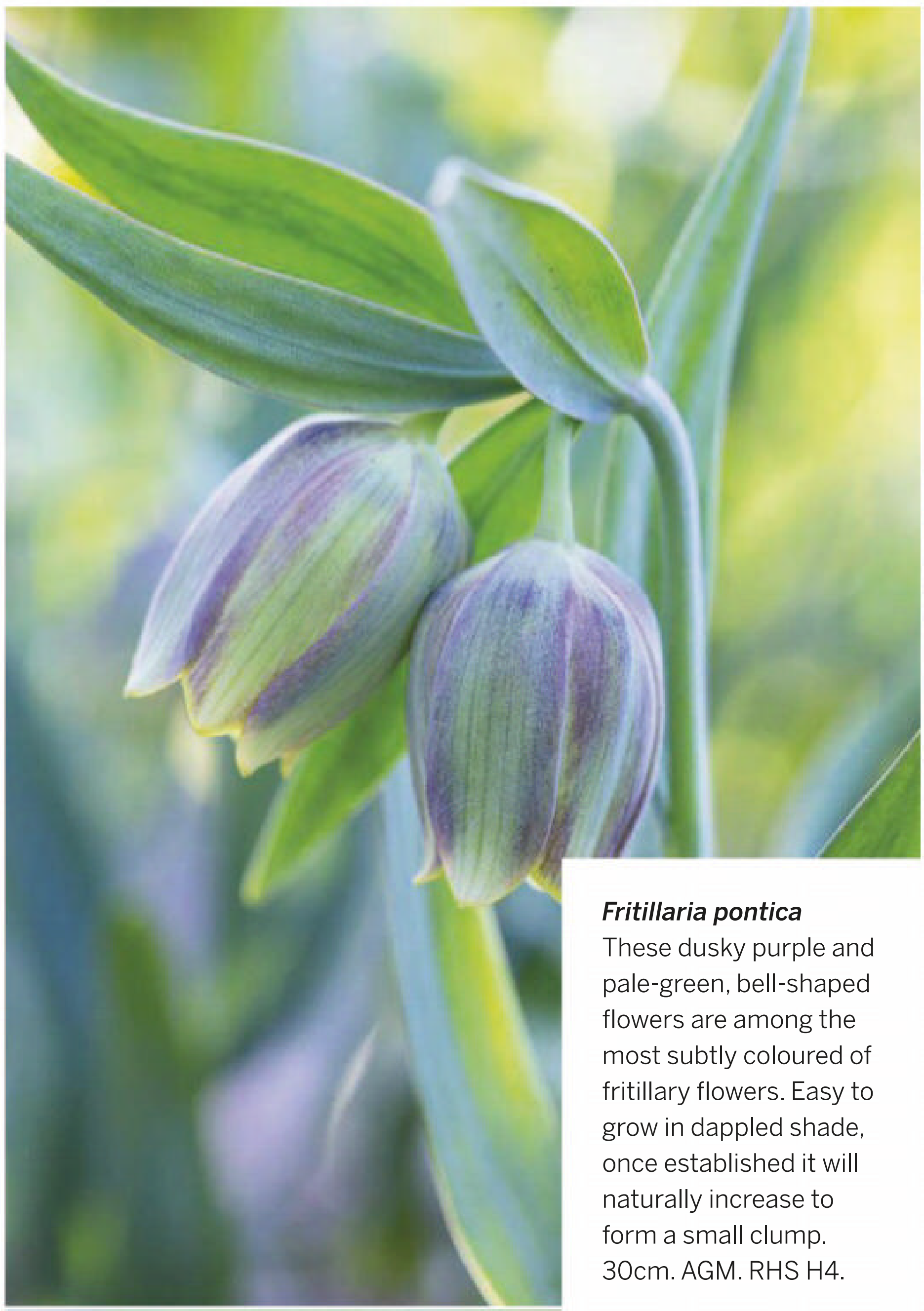


Fritillaria pallidiflora
Known as the Siberian fritillary, this beautiful species has relatively large, box-shaped flowers of pale, creamy green and broad, blue-green leaves. Brightens up a shady corner with its ethereal blooms on dark stems. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H5.

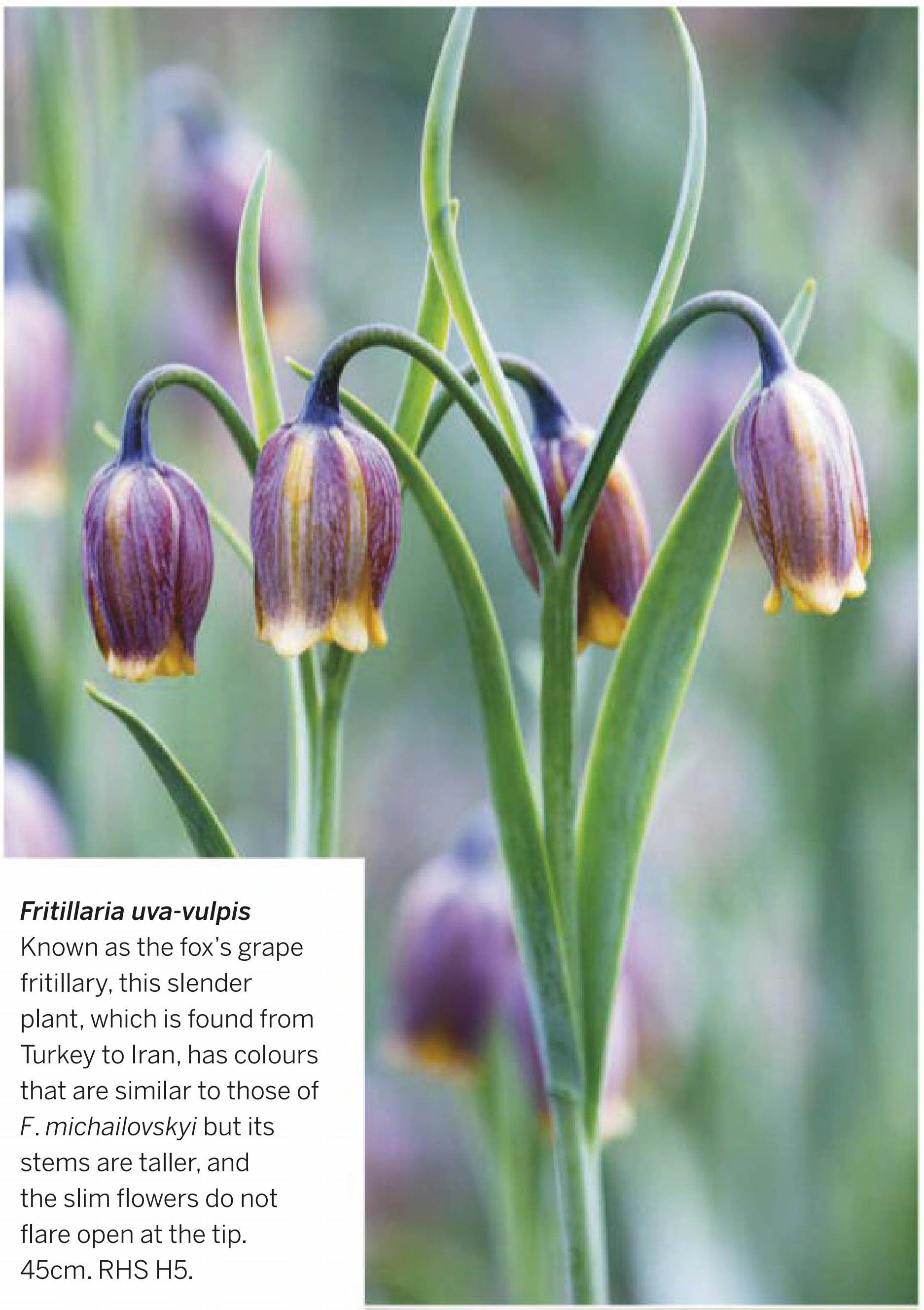
Fritillaria meleagris
The snake's head fritillary is a plant of damp spring meadows where its square-shouldered, chequered, purple flowers are held on thin, wiry stems. The white form is known as *F. meleagris* subvar. *alba*. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

Fritillaria acmopetala
Known as the pointed-petal fritillary, this is a good garden plant that can hold its own in a sunny border if planted as a group. It has a relatively large flower of pale green with dashes and smudges of purple. 40cm. AGM. RHS H4.

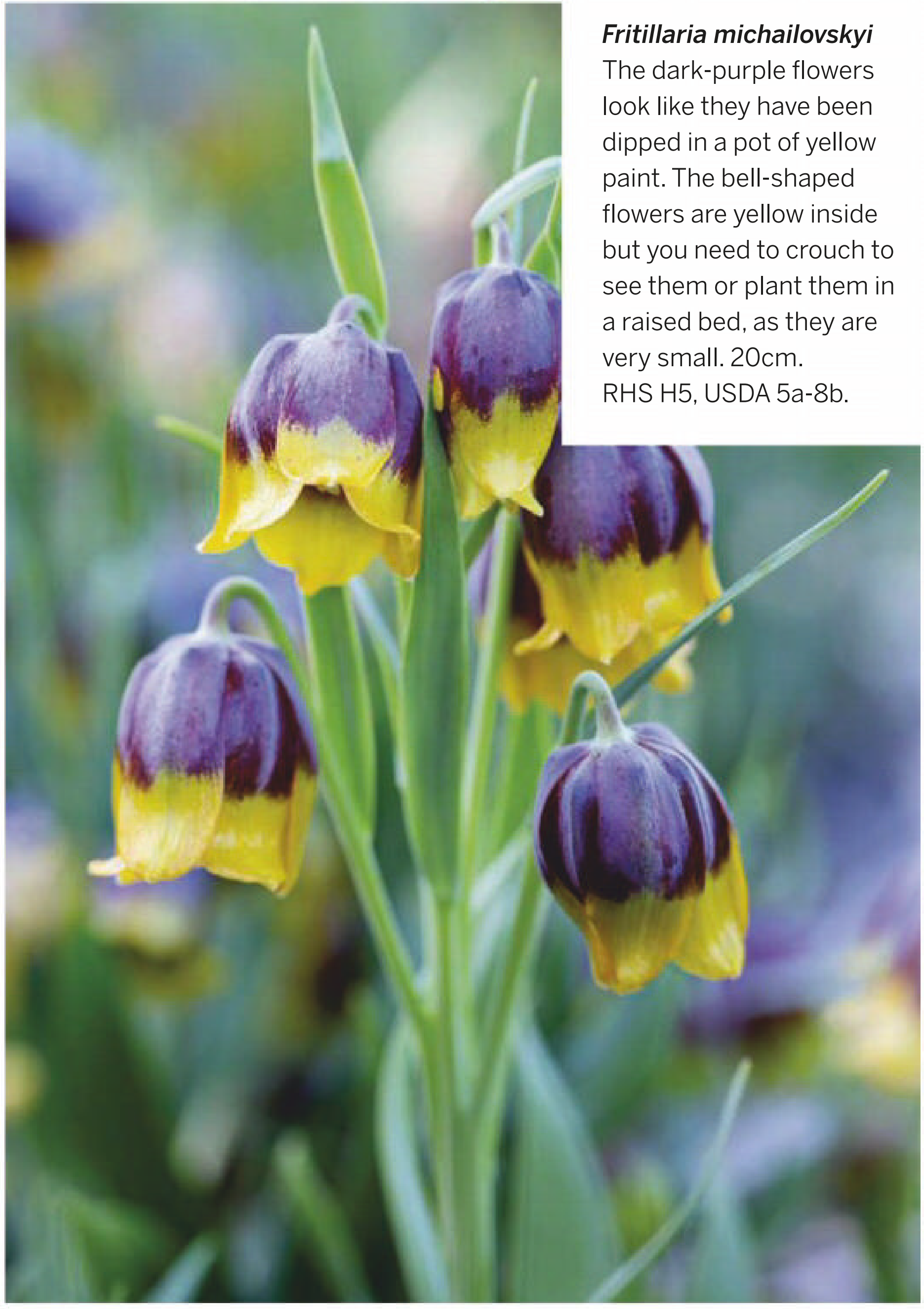
***Fritillaria persica* 'Ivory Bells'**
In the wild this variable species has flowers in shades of purple, pale lilac, brownish-yellow or green. 'Ivory Bells' has dense spikes of creamy green bells and is one of the more elegant forms. 1m. RHS H4.



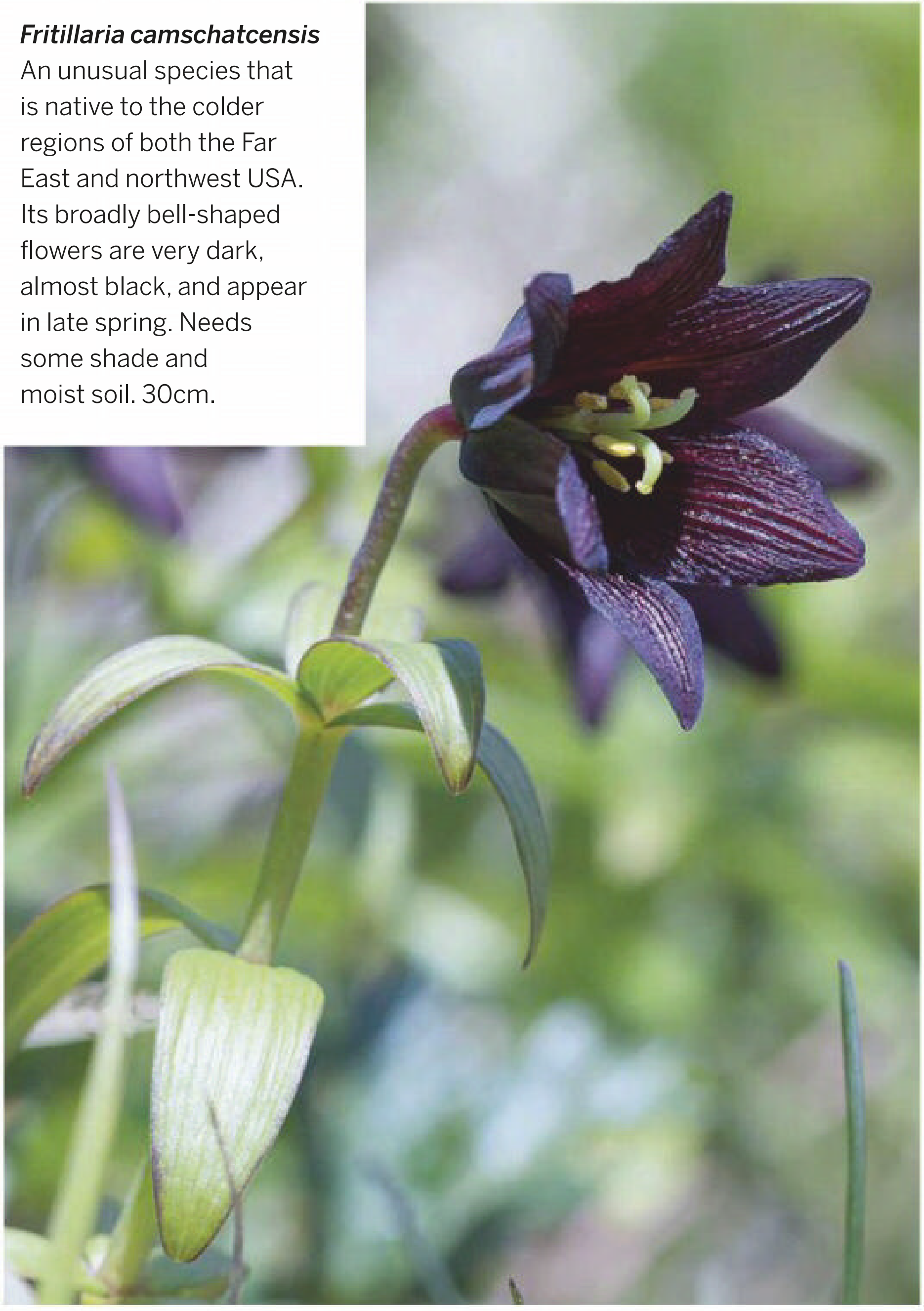
Fritillaria pontica
These dusky purple and pale-green, bell-shaped flowers are among the most subtly coloured of fritillary flowers. Easy to grow in dappled shade, once established it will naturally increase to form a small clump. 30cm. AGM. RHS H4.



Fritillaria uva-vulpis
Known as the fox's grape fritillary, this slender plant, which is found from Turkey to Iran, has colours that are similar to those of *F. michailovskyi* but its stems are taller, and the slim flowers do not flare open at the tip. 45cm. RHS H5.

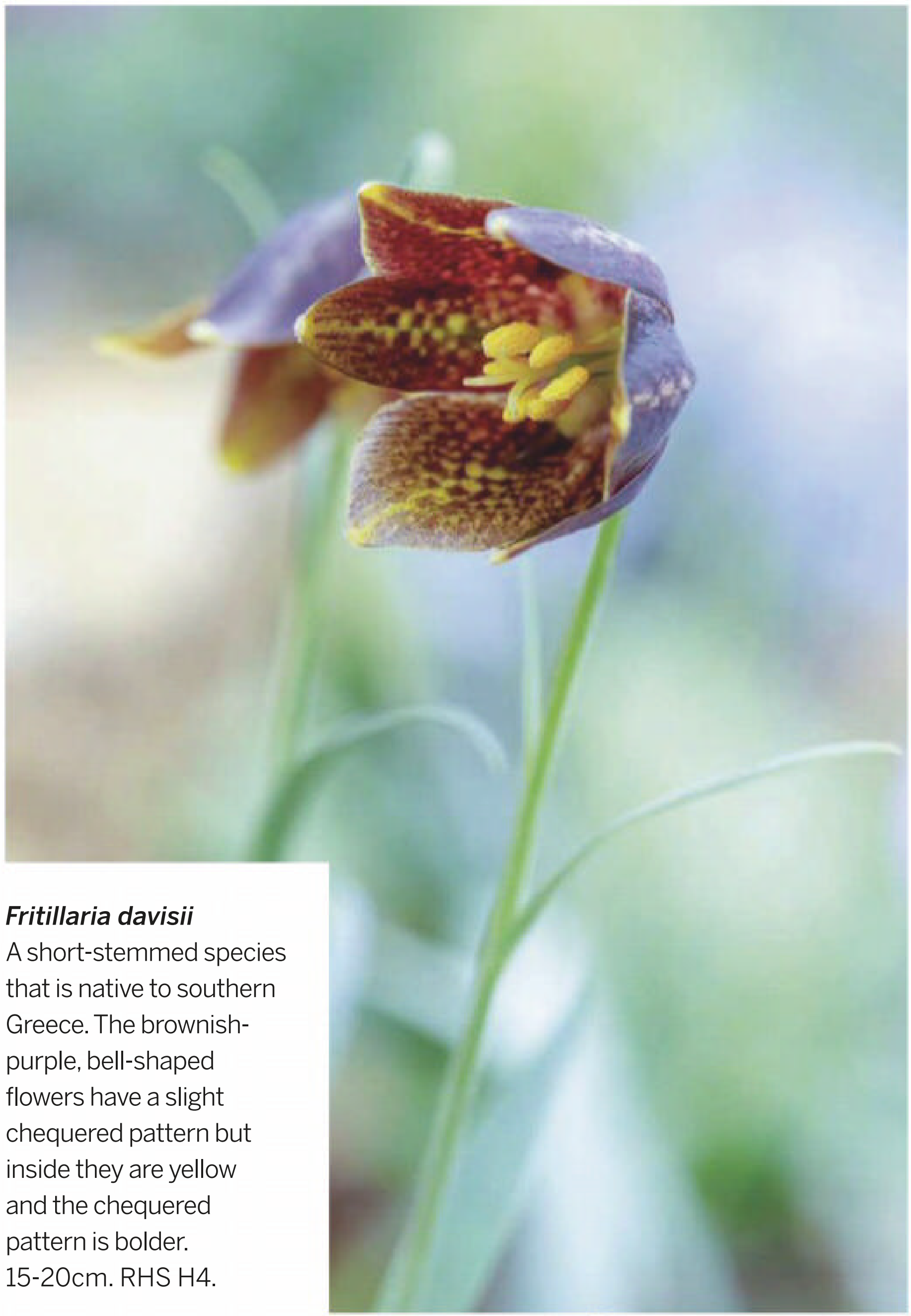


Fritillaria michailovskyi
The dark-purple flowers look like they have been dipped in a pot of yellow paint. The bell-shaped flowers are yellow inside but you need to crouch to see them or plant them in a raised bed, as they are very small. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.

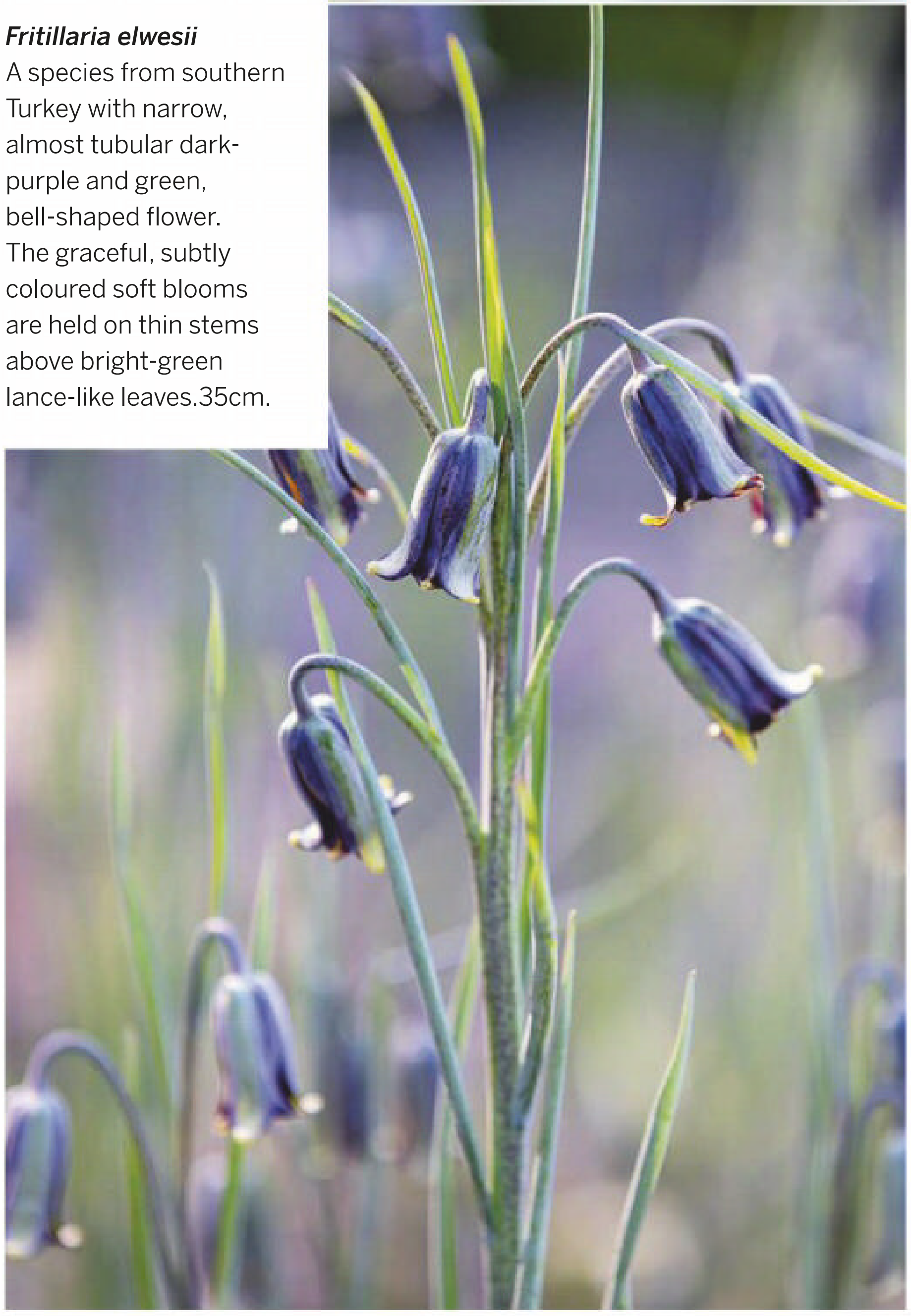


Fritillaria camschatcensis
An unusual species that is native to the colder regions of both the Far East and northwest USA. Its broadly bell-shaped flowers are very dark, almost black, and appear in late spring. Needs some shade and moist soil. 30cm.

FRITILLARIA CAMSCHATCENSIS BY BIOSPHOTO / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Fritillaria davisii
A short-stemmed species that is native to southern Greece. The brownish-purple, bell-shaped flowers have a slight chequered pattern but inside they are yellow and the chequered pattern is bolder. 15-20cm. RHS H4.



Fritillaria elwesii
A species from southern Turkey with narrow, almost tubular dark-purple and green, bell-shaped flower. The graceful, subtly coloured soft blooms are held on thin stems above bright-green lance-like leaves.35cm.

FRITILLARIA DAVISII BY TIM GAINEY / GAP PHOTOS

Cultivation

Fritillaries are found in a range of habitats so it is difficult to generalise about ideal growing conditions. Some grow in harsh conditions on high mountains, while the snake's head fritillary, *F. meleagris*, grows in low altitude, damp meadows. Thankfully, there are several that can easily be grown in the garden and most will do well in full sun to light shade, or under deciduous trees, shaded from the hot summer sun when dormant.

The bulbs of fritillaries should be planted in autumn. Most have fairly small bulbs, although those of the mighty crown imperial can be larger than a tennis ball and have a foxy smell. Species from the Mediterranean region, such as *F. davisii*, *F. messanensis*, *F. michailovskyi* and *F. acmopetala*, will do best with plenty of sunlight and a dry summer. Plant the bulbs in free-draining soil or around deciduous shrubs that will take up excess moisture in the summer.

To improve drainage, bulbs can be grown in a raised bed, where water will drain more quickly. The soil can also be amended by adding extra grit or sand. If you don't have suitable garden soil, then this could be a way to grow some of the Mediterranean species or the Central Asian *F. eduardii*. Alternatively, try them in pots of gritty, loam-based soil, kept dry but shaded in summer.

The crown imperial also likes plenty of sunlight in spring but is remarkably tolerant of many garden situations. In good, fertile soil that never gets waterlogged, this handsome plant is easily grown. As with many fritillaries, it does well in a spot that is lightly shaded in summer. The same is true of *F. persica*. This makes a great late-spring bulb for a south-facing herbaceous border, the bulbs protected from summer heat by the surrounding perennials. Other easy species for a sunny border include *F. elwesii*, *F. uva-vulpis, F. pyrenaica* and *F. pontica*. These tolerate some summer moisture but the main consideration is their location relative to other plants. Although they can be quite tall, they are not imposing plants and they can be swamped by vigorous spring perennials so chose a spot carefully, where you can appreciate their subtle beauty.

In a more consistently shady part of the garden, try *F. pallidiflora* or *F. camschatcensis*. These do well in a cooler location but avoid deep shade. At the foot of a low wall, in a partly shaded corner with other woodland plants, they will thrive.

The only fritillary to reliably do well in grass is *F. meleagris*. It will do best in a damp, shallow hollow in a lawn, lightly shaded by deciduous trees or along a hedge. Plant the bulbs by lifting the turf, placing the bulbs on the soil and replacing the turf. They will flower in mid-spring but make sure the grass is not cut until the fritillary leaves have died down for the summer.

Many fritillaries will slowly increase naturally but to speed things up, lift the bulbs in early summer and spread them around, or remove offsets to grow on separately.

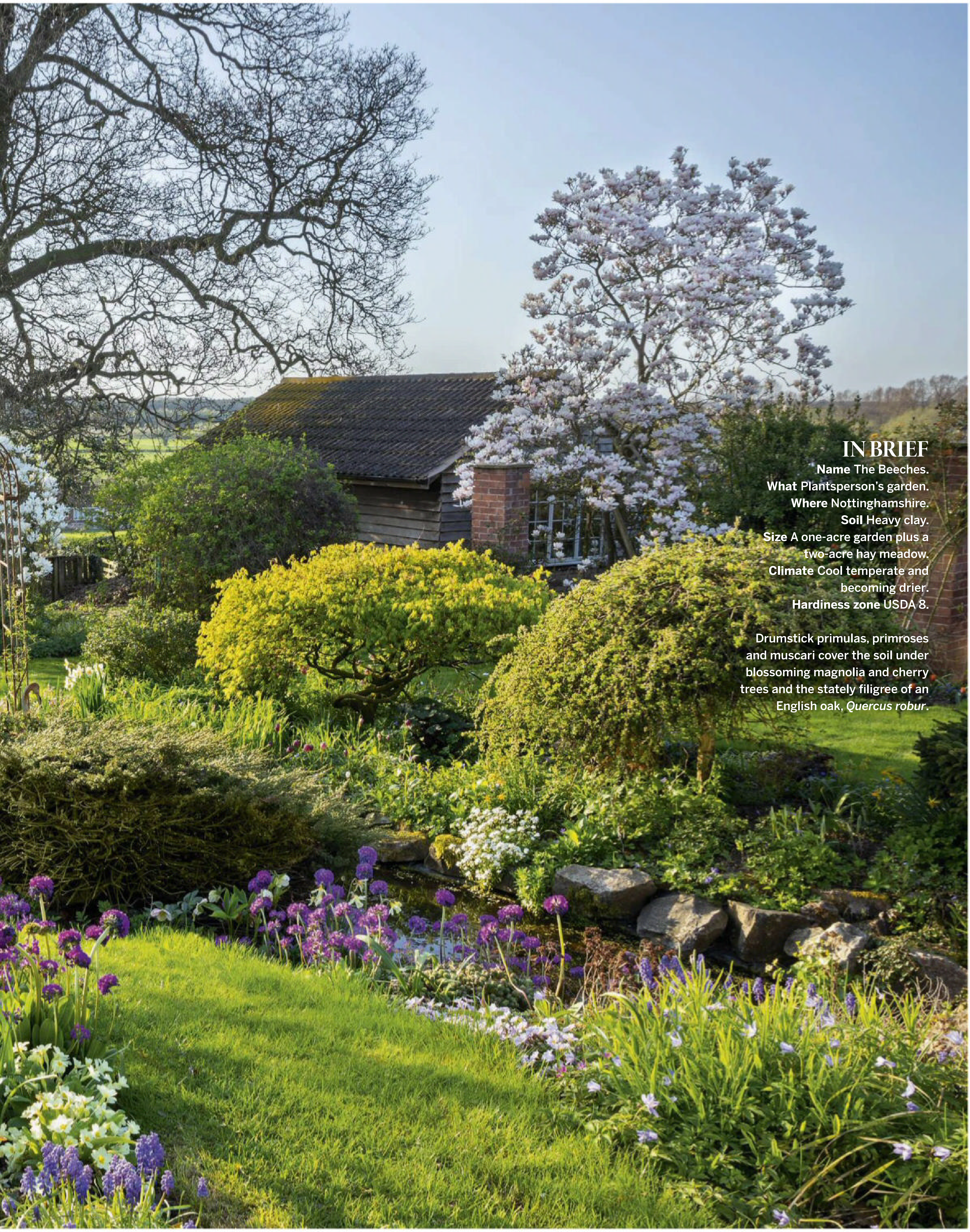
Where to see and buy

- **Avon Bulbs**
  Burnt House Farm,
  Mid Lambrook, South
  Petherton, Somerset TA13
  5HE. Tel 01460 242177,
  avonbulbs.co.uk
- **Hortus Bulborum**
  Zuidkerkenlaan 23A,
  1906 AC Limmen,
  the Netherlands.
  Tel +31 6 11889489, hortus-bulborum.nl/english
- **Jacques Amand International**
  The Nurseries,
  Clamp Hill, Stanmore,
  Middlesex HA7 3JS.
  Tel 020 8420 7110,
  jacquesamandintl.com
- **Kevock Garden Plants**
  Kevock Road, Lasswade,
  Midlothian EH18 1HX.
  Tel 0131 454 0660,
  kevockgarden.co.uk

Close encounters

In this spring garden, choice plants are selected for their outstanding individual features

WORDS **MATTHEW BIGGS** PHOTOGRAPHS **BENNET SMITH**



IN BRIEF

Name The Beeches.
What Plantsperson's garden.
Where Nottinghamshire.
Soil Heavy clay.
Size A one-acre garden plus a two-acre hay meadow.
Climate Cool temperate and becoming drier.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

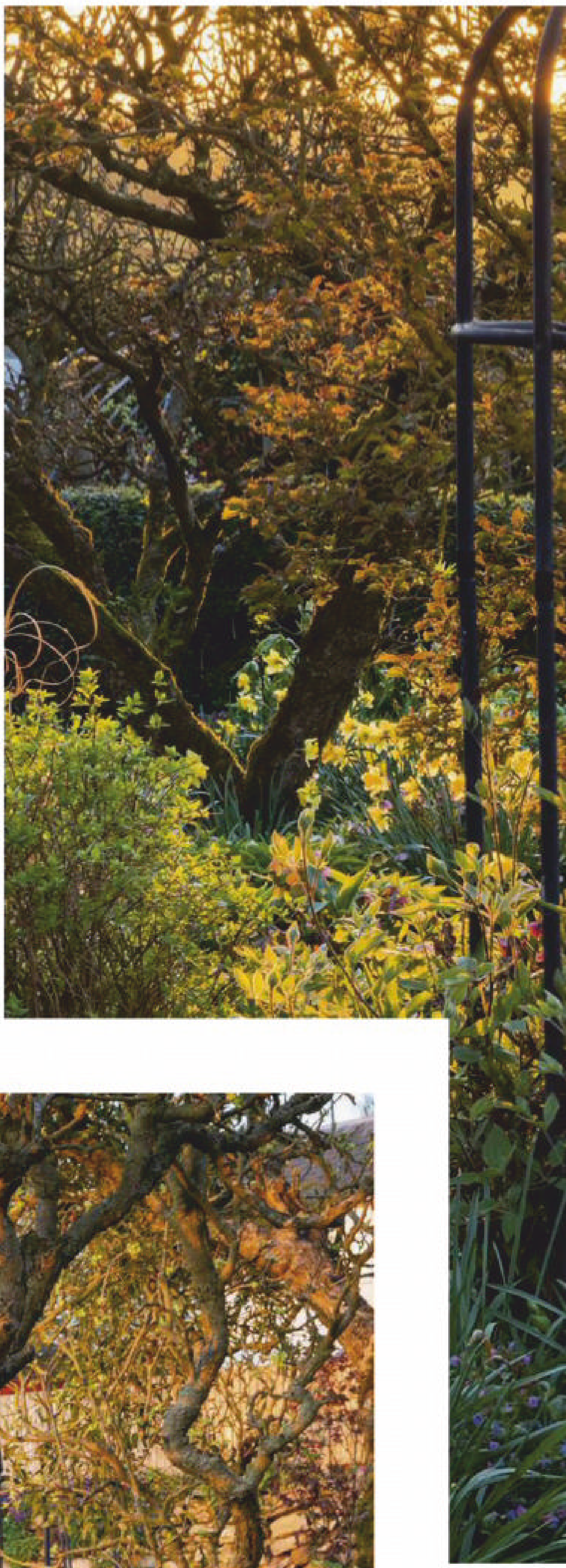
Drumstick primulas, primroses and muscari cover the soil under blossoming magnolia and cherry trees and the stately filigree of an English oak, *Quercus robur*.

Over the past 45 years, three acres of pasture in Nottinghamshire have been transformed into a garden packed with plants. Margaret Swindin was born in Worcestershire and as a child she loved the wildflowers in the surrounding countryside.

When she first arrived at The Beeches with her husband James, it took time to clear the ground thoroughly: "As soon as we started, I was keen to reach the retaining wall – originally a ha-ha – at the end of the vicarage garden next door; it was the ideal place to begin planting." Several trees were felled, revealing glorious, panoramic views over the surrounding countryside, and garden making began in earnest.

First came the vegetable garden to feed the family. Next, after laying a lawn, borders were designed using a rope to create organic shapes on the sloping ground, and then cut out. The soil was improved for planting by digging in well-rotted horse manure and several brick pillars were built to support roses, such as long-flowering, semi-double Händel (= 'Macha'), with white blooms and pink-and-red margins, and bright-vermillion Super Star (= 'Tanorstar'). The stream and ponds were carefully dug out by hand.

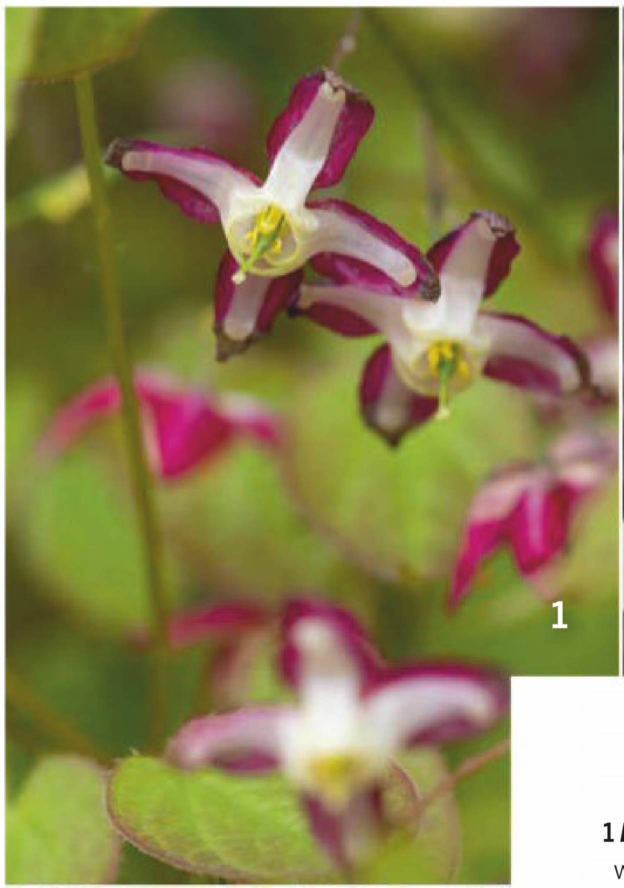
Visitors in springtime are greeted at the garden gate by a meadow filled with flowers, among them the nodding chequerboard blooms of *Fritillaria meleagris*; dwarf *Narcissus* 'Jetfire', a striking combination of yellow and bright-orange trumpets; ▷



Right The character of the garden is transformed when the soft light of a spring dawn floods the garden, highlighting the shape and form of emerging stems and fresh foliage. The richly textured planting of hellebores and pulmonarias creates a pleasing counterpoint to the borrowed landscape beyond.

Below The emerging foliage of bulbs and herbaceous plants in myriad shades of green is illuminated by the joyful yellow blooms of daffodils and rusty-orange *Fritillaria imperialis*. The mossy boughs of apple trees and nearby plant supports add height and structure to this gradually evolving scene.

Visitors in springtime are greeted by a meadow filled with flowers, creating a nodding chequerboard of blooms



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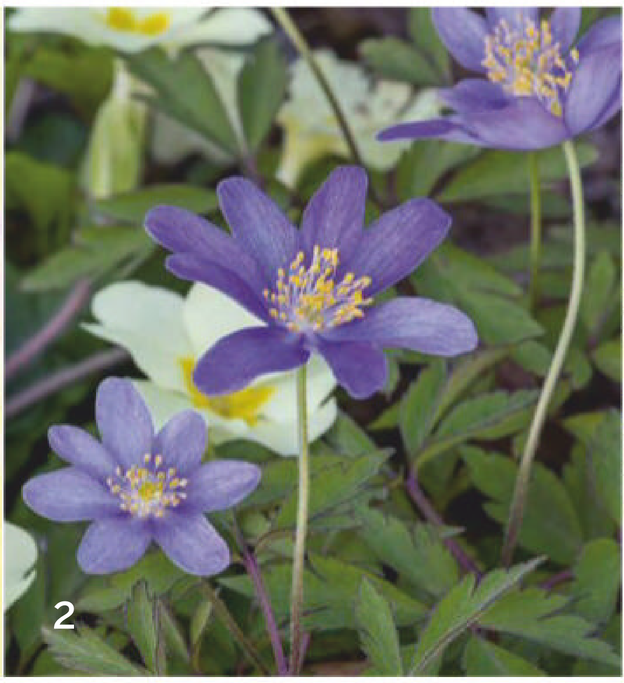

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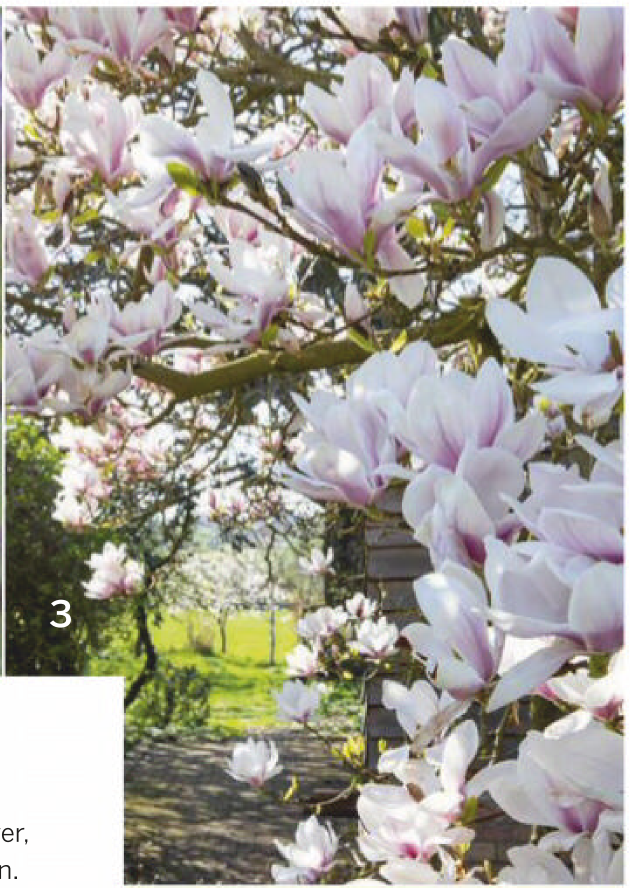


3

8 KEY PLANTS

1 *Epimedium* x *rubrum* Excellent deciduous groundcover, whose bronze-tinted, spring foliage turns red in autumn. Contrasting colours of crimson and bright cream make the dainty flowers glow. 30cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b[†].

2 *Anemone nemorosa* 'Robinsoniana' Perfect for naturalising in borders and woodland, the dainty, light-blue flowers are a refreshing change to shades of yellow that dominate in spring. 20cm. AGM. RHS H5.

3 *Magnolia* x *soulangeana* A large deciduous shrub or small tree, with massed, goblet-shaped, white flowers with burgundy and pink tints. 6m. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

4 *Pulmonaria* 'Lewis Palmer' The leaves have greenish-white spots and the flowers open purple-pink, fading to a soft-violet blue. 35cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

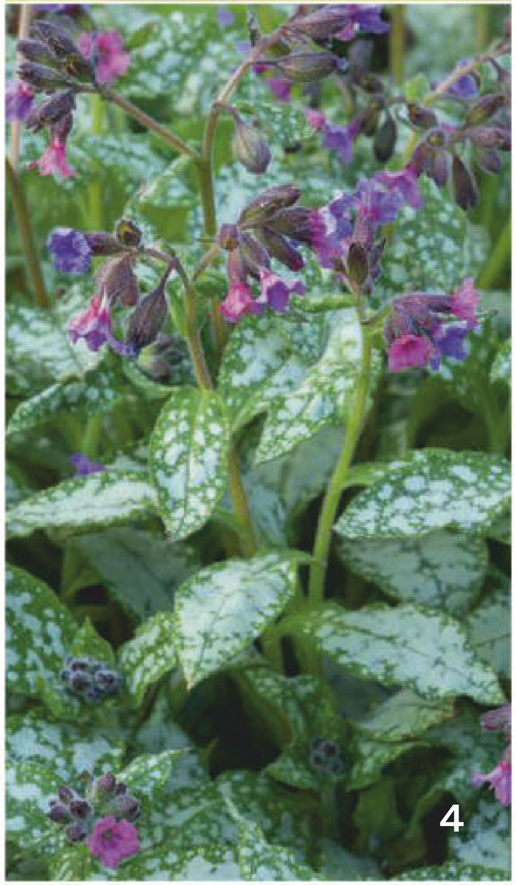
5 *Muscari macrocarpum* 'Golden Fragrance' Violet flowers age to bright yellow and are strongly scented of banana. Ideal for a hot, dry, free-draining position. 12cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Erythronium californicum* 'White Beauty' Star-shaped, white flowers with reflexed petals in late spring, held above neat clumps of mottled leaves. 30cm. AGM. RHS H5.

7 *Tulipa clusiana* 'Cynthia' Refined species tulip with narrow, pale-green leaves and delicate flowers in tones of cream, yellow and rose. 25cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

8 *Pulsatilla rubra* Long-lasting, plum-red flowers with bright-yellow stamens and decorative leaves. It is attractive both in flower and in seed. 20cm. RHS H5.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.



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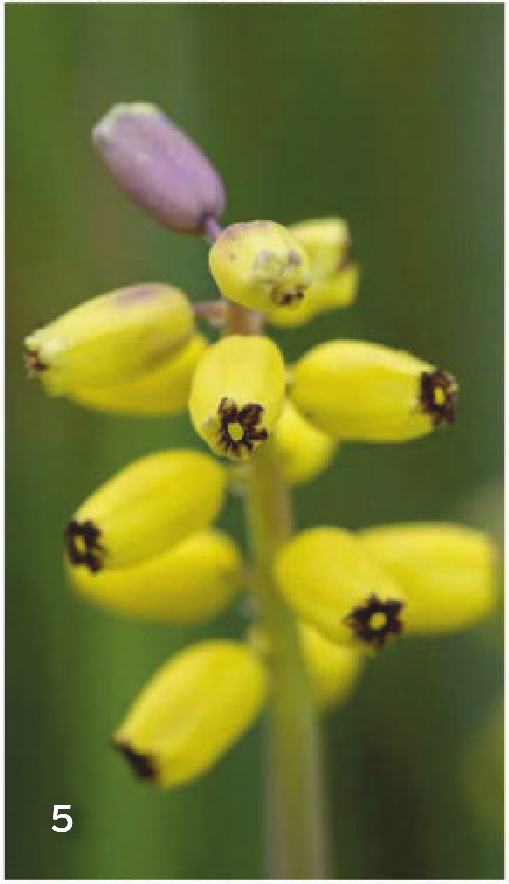

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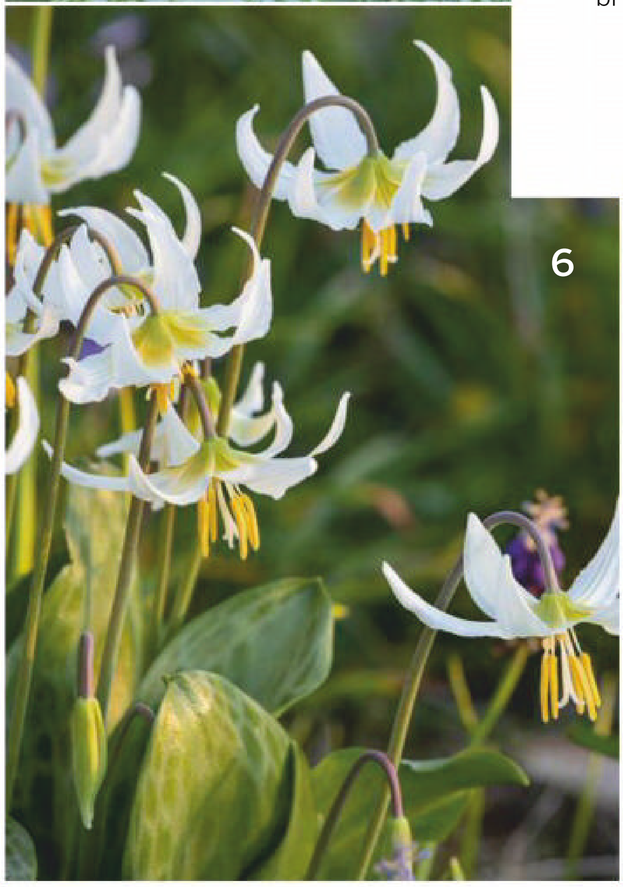

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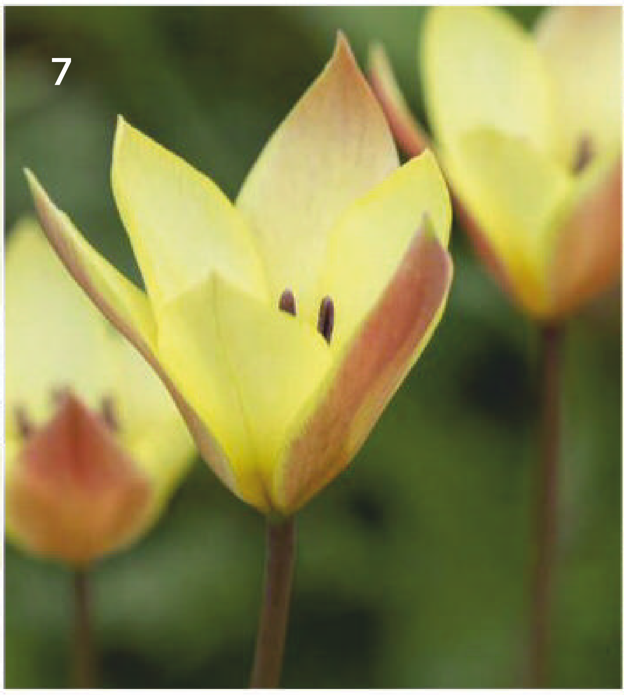

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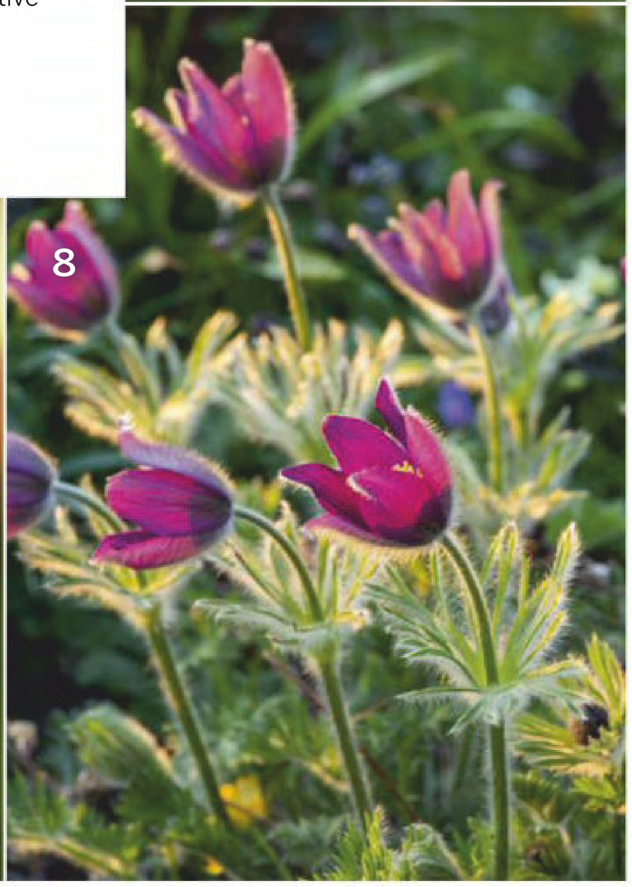

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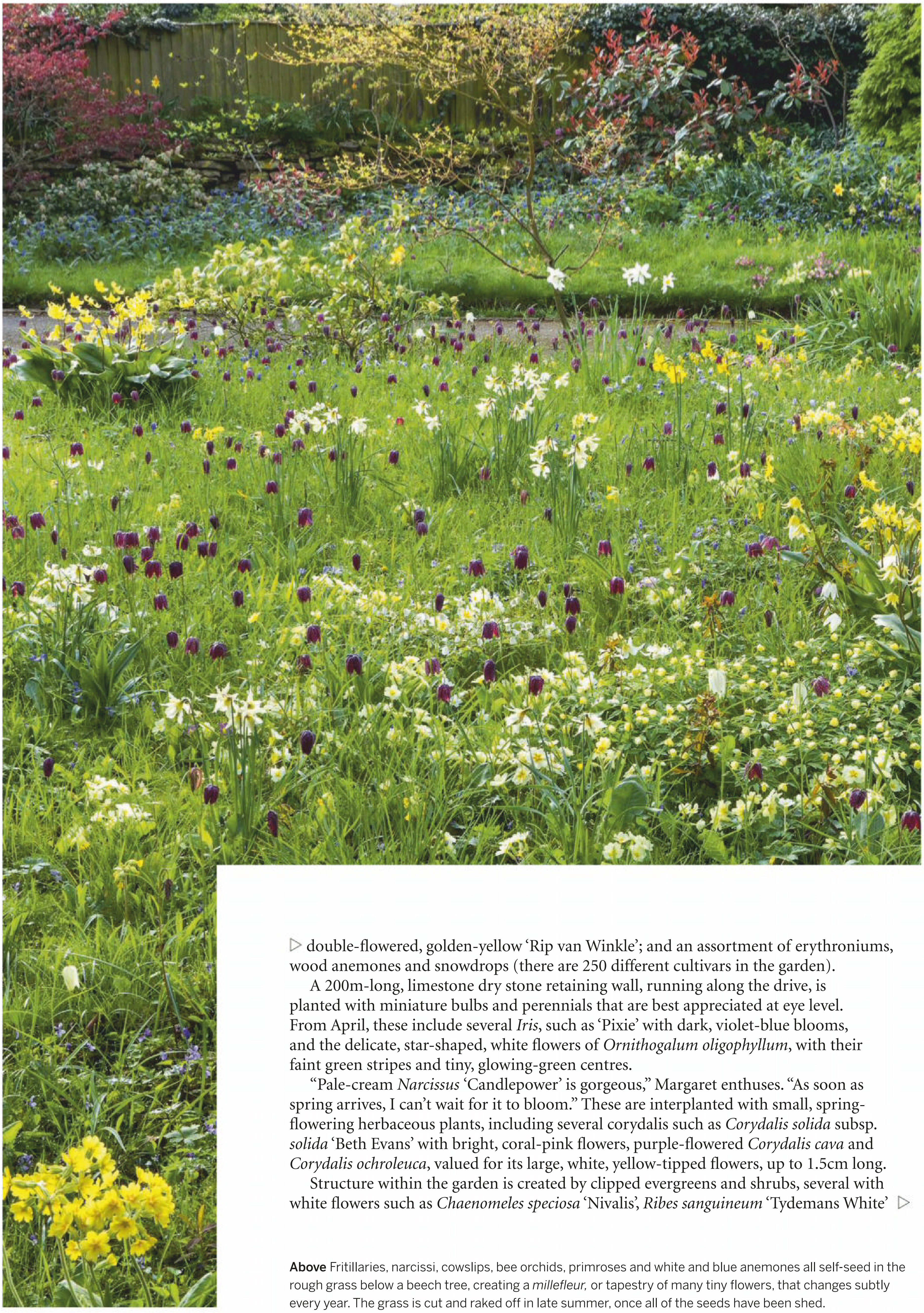


▷ double-flowered, golden-yellow ‘Rip van Winkle’; and an assortment of erythroniums, wood anemones and snowdrops (there are 250 different cultivars in the garden).

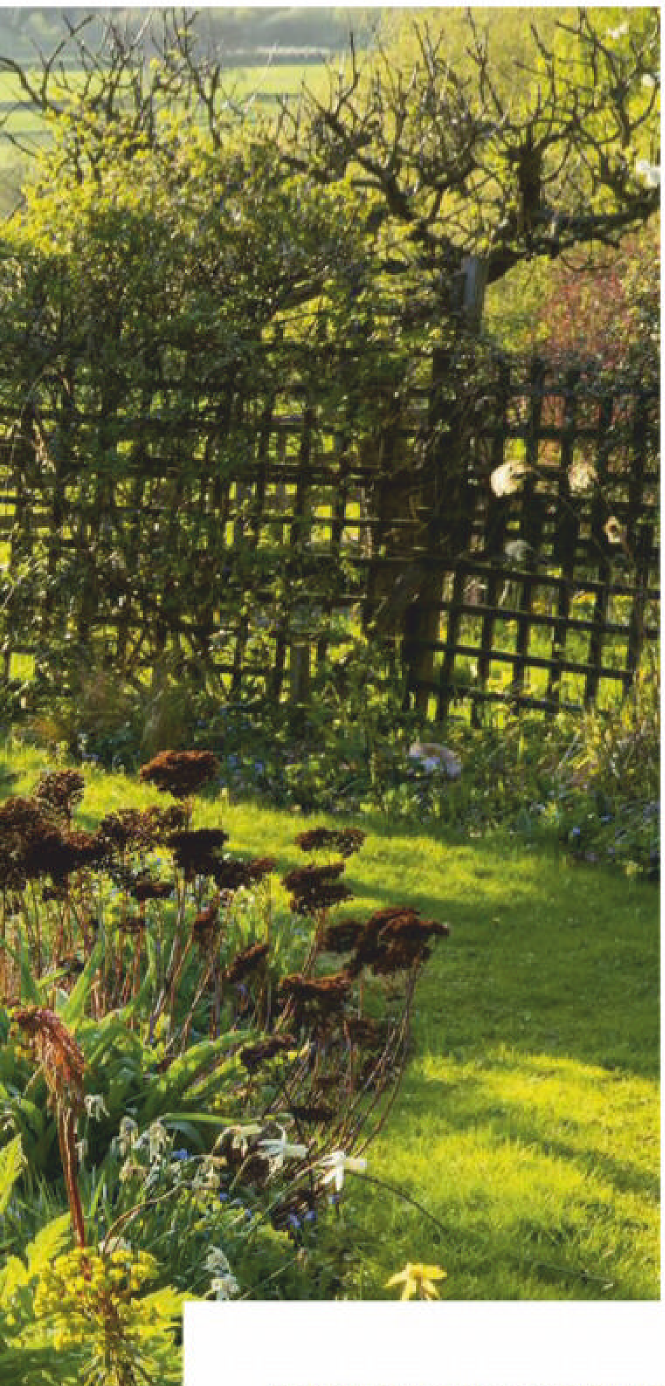
A 200m-long, limestone dry stone retaining wall, running along the drive, is planted with miniature bulbs and perennials that are best appreciated at eye level. From April, these include several *Iris*, such as ‘Pixie’ with dark, violet-blue blooms, and the delicate, star-shaped, white flowers of *Ornithogalum oligophyllum*, with their faint green stripes and tiny, glowing-green centres.

“Pale-cream *Narcissus* ‘Candlepower’ is gorgeous,” Margaret enthuses. “As soon as spring arrives, I can’t wait for it to bloom.” These are interplanted with small, spring-flowering herbaceous plants, including several corydalis such as *Corydalis solida* subsp. *solida* ‘Beth Evans’ with bright, coral-pink flowers, purple-flowered *Corydalis cava* and *Corydalis ochroleuca*, valued for its large, white, yellow-tipped flowers, up to 1.5cm long.

Structure within the garden is created by clipped evergreens and shrubs, several with white flowers such as *Chaenomeles speciosa* ‘Nivalis’, *Ribes sanguineum* ‘Tydemans White’ ▷

Above Fritillaries, narcissi, cowslips, bee orchids, primroses and white and blue anemones all self-seed in the rough grass below a beech tree, creating a *millefleur,* or tapestry of many tiny flowers, that changes subtly every year. The grass is cut and raked off in late summer, once all of the seeds have been shed.

Structure is created by clipped evergreens and shrubs, and self-sown hellebore hybrids fill in any early gaps in the borders



▷ and *Magnolia* x *soulangeana*, whose blooms are streaked with dashes of claret and pink. Below in the borders, self-sown hellebore hybrids fill the gaps in the emerging patchwork of fresh foliage. “I often visit Ashwood Nurseries and treat myself to their Garden Hybrids because they are so lovely,” says Margaret. Her favourites include “A double white spotted, which is always one of the earliest to flower and the flowers last a long time; a single dusky grape, which creates a beautiful contrast; and the unusual Ashwood Evolution Group Neon Shades, with their yellow flowers, golden nectaries and deep-red tints and veining, which are totally different from anything else in flower at this time of year.” Among Margaret’s other treasures are *Helleborus* Anna’s Red (= ‘Abcrd02’) – named for garden writer Anna Pavord – which boasts red flowers and marbled foliage, and *Helleborus multifidus* subsp. *hercegovinus*, admired for its apple-green flowers and finely cut leaves, and commonly known as the ‘ferny hellebore’ (a leaf was once found with 185 divisions).

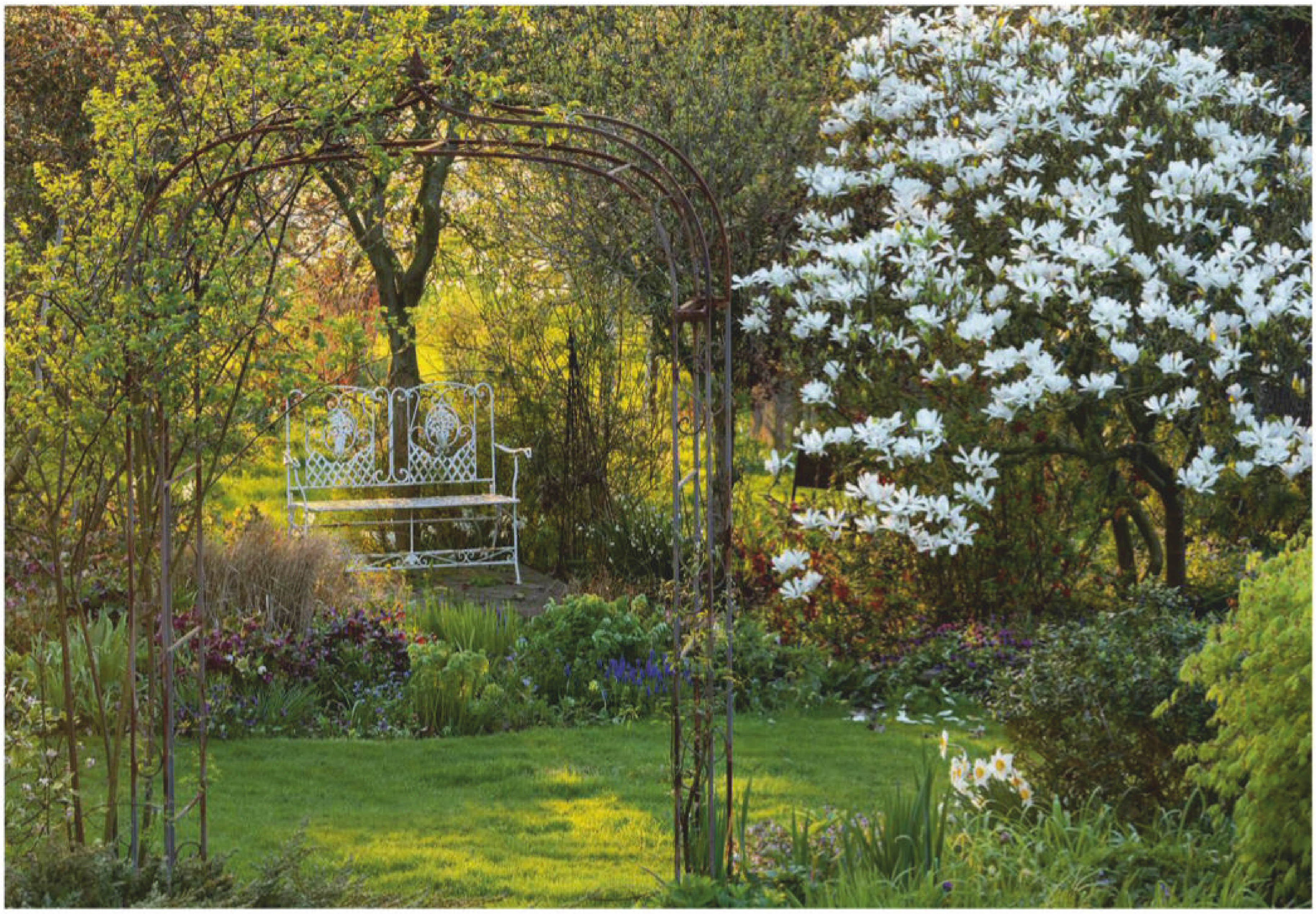
There are also several fine pulmonarias, including *Pulmonaria* ‘Lewis Palmer’, whose leaves have greenish-white spots and flowers that open purple-pink, gradually fading to a soft violet-blue; *Pulmonaria* ‘Looking Glass’, sporting bright, silvered leaves; and *Pulmonaria rubra* decked in deep-coral flowers and mid-green foliage, which combines well with snowdrops.

A mature oak tree in one corner of the garden is a mixed blessing. “Without regular raking there is a layer of leaves up to 30cm deep,” explains James, “and it can take up to three days to clear them from the lawn and borders, but it does supply us with an unlimited supply of leaf mould for the borders and vegetable garden.

The garden is renowned for its views, but anyone who studies the foreground will be equally well rewarded – especially those with a passion for choice and unusual plants. □

Left Early plant growth is faster in sunnier parts of the garden, away from the skeletal shadow of the giant oaks and beeches. Self-seeded hellebores and narcissi are followed later by polemoniums and alliums. Dense planting creates an attractive patchwork and weed-suppressing groundcover.

Below *Magnolia kobus* is a flower-filled focal point in spring, as herbaceous plants and nearby climbing roses, trained over a wrought-iron arch, burst into early growth. The seat, in a shady spot, becomes the perfect place for contemplation in the sunnier days ahead.



HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

HELEN BOEM

The RHS's floral marquee manager on making whistle-stop tours of the UK, the pleasures of personal show previews and the challenges of finding new exhibitors

WORDS STEPHANIE MAHON PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

When we meet, Helen Boem is just back from a trip to Newcastle, preceded by a jaunt to Devon. She often finds herself up a mountain in Wales, in a valley in Yorkshire, or traversing across Cornwall, and this is all in a day's work for the RHS Floral Marquee Manager, whose job it is to discover and promote independent nurseries from across the length and breadth of the land.

"In my tour of the UK, I've visited 160 nurseries of all different plant types, groups and specialisms," she explains. "It satisfies my need to learn about plants. When the growers are passionate about what they do, that makes me passionate about it too."

Growing up in Slough, Helen wasn't always quite so excited by horticulture. She studied and worked in travel and tourism, but when she moved into her first home, in Essex, the growing bug bit. "The garden was like a wilderness, so I started to clear it, and then growing from seed, taking cuttings. It took over." At the age of 25, she decided to leave her job and study horticulture at Writtle College, doing placements at a garden centre and potting up plants in a nursery, before working for an interior landscaping company, and then as a designer at a landscaping firm for ten years.

It wasn't until 2013, when she volunteered at RHS Chelsea Flower Show as a 'Plant Hunter', helping members of the public find plants in the Great Pavilion, that her true calling became clear. She applied for several vacancies in the RHS before they approached her about a brand new role, managing the floral marquees at all the shows throughout the season.

"At the shows, it's non-stop," she says. "As soon as I step foot on site, the noise, dust, familiar smells and intensity hit me like nothing else. There are always problems that need sorting out, and it's my job to make sure they get dealt with as quickly as possible, and make the whole process smooth and easy for the growers." Memorable issues she has had to deal with so far include night-time raids by curious foxes, flooding that almost washed away paving, and an exhibitor who broke her wrist during build-up (the other growers kindly stepped in to finish her stand while she was in hospital).

Initially, the job was on a freelance basis, but her role was soon expanded to help combat one of the looming issues in the industry. "We are losing exhibitors, because nursery people are retiring, but no one is taking over their businesses," she explains. It's tough to make growing plants pay, and fewer young people seem interested in trying to make a living in horticulture, but Helen has noticed a growing trend for what she calls 'micro nurseries'. "They are people who are real plant specialists, but working two jobs or full time at another job, and growing almost as a hobby, who would like to pursue it as a career but they can't quite make the leap, because it won't sustain them on its own."

Her efforts to recruit new nurseries include an insightful annual seminar during the build up of RHS Malvern Spring Festival. "People might think that exhibiting is too much for them, but when they get the opportunity to see a show as it is built up, it's not as scary; and having me as a contact, someone who is there to help them, has made quite a big difference." Some of her latest finds include Botanico nursery for tender plants; Andy's Air Plants; and Glyn Bach Gardens' National Collection of *Monarda*, exhibiting for the first time at RHS Flower Show Tatton Park this year.

At the seminar, these newbies enjoy talks on creating award-winning displays, with advice on doing a mock-up at home and how to create levels, tilt plants and pack out the planting. "What makes a good display is the attention to detail," says Helen. "It's the scale and balance of the design, but it really comes down to the standard of your plant material." Old hands will go to extreme lengths to get a gold medal, refrigerating bulbs in bud for weeks, tying each individual bloom up in tissue paper or keeping them out in the sun until just before judging in an effort to get them flowering at exactly the right time. "Last year at Hampton Court, one nursery had a huge net covering their whole display until judging, to stop the bees from draining all the lavender flowers!"

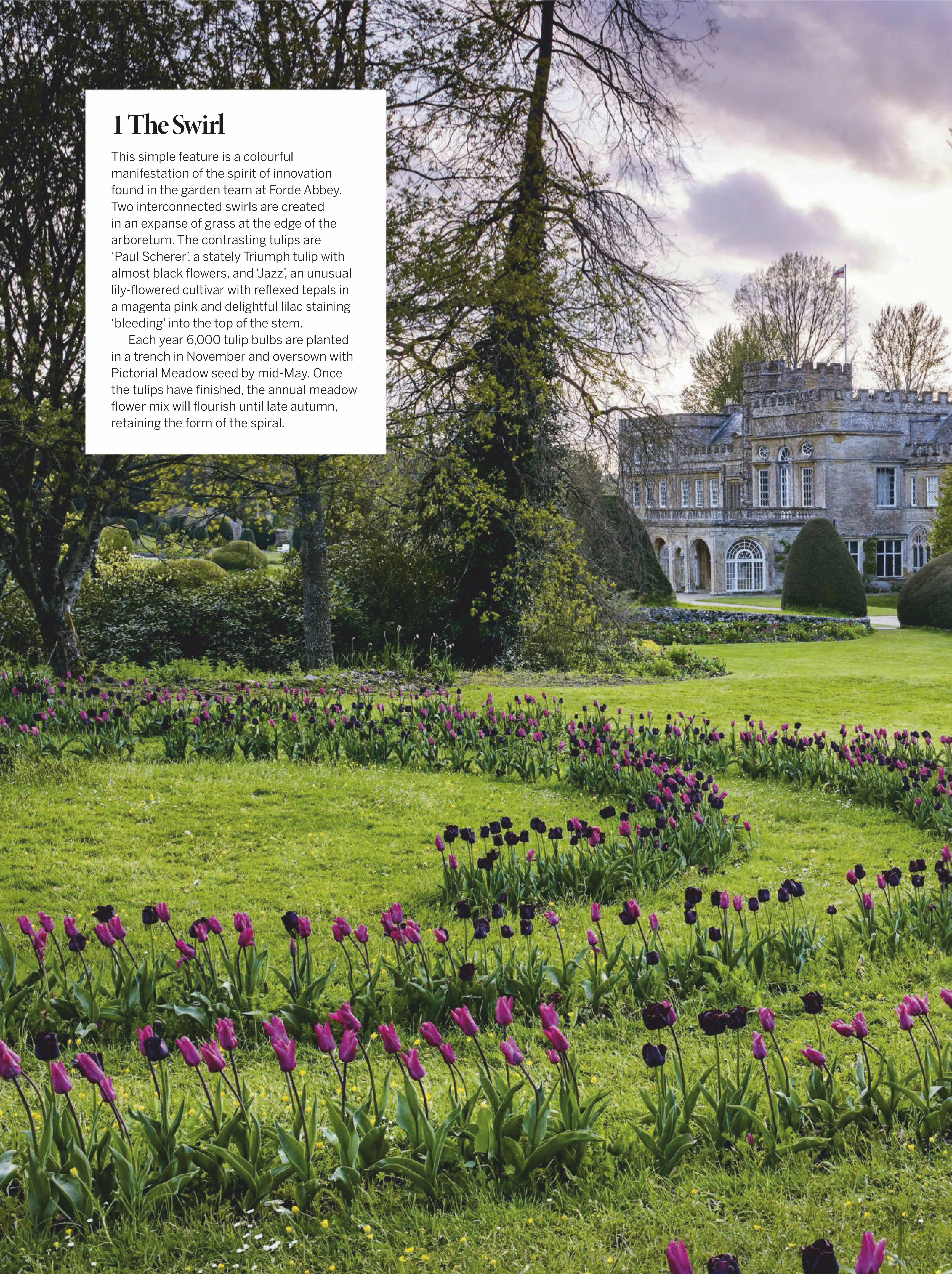
> ONE NURSERY HAD A NET COVERING THEIR DISPLAY TO STOP THE BEES DRAINING ALL THE LAVENDER

These experienced, knowledgeable growers are essential to the marquees, and the reason Helen came up with another initiative, the Master Grower project. "There was a lot of emphasis on new nurseries, but nothing for the ones that had been coming to shows for years, so we decided to introduce a showcase, co-curated with them, to promote their work."

It's one of the favourite parts of her job, but she admits the best bit is the personal preview she gets before the shows open. "The evening before, when everything is ready but there are few people around, is my opportunity to spend time in the marquee looking at the exhibits and taking in the wonder of it all. It's such a privilege to see everything with no one there, and I always feel a sense of pride for what has been achieved by all the exhibitors." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

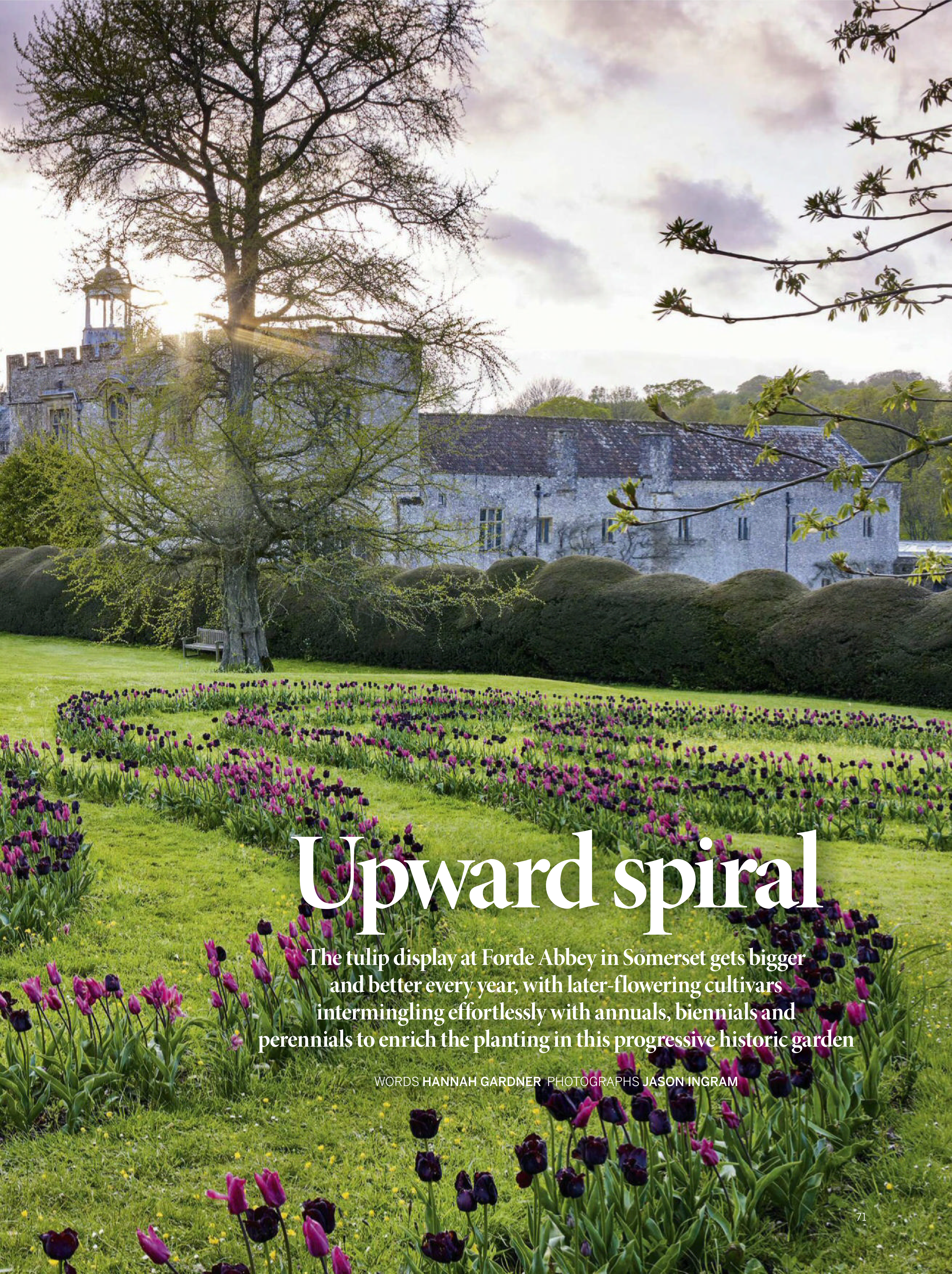
The RHS show season begins this month with RHS Flower Show Cardiff, Bute Park, Cardiff Castle, Cardiff CF10 1BJ.
17-19 April, 10am-5pm. Tickets from £12.25. rhs.org.uk



1 The Swirl

This simple feature is a colourful manifestation of the spirit of innovation found in the garden team at Forde Abbey. Two interconnected swirls are created in an expanse of grass at the edge of the arboretum. The contrasting tulips are 'Paul Scherer', a stately Triumph tulip with almost black flowers, and 'Jazz', an unusual lily-flowered cultivar with reflexed tepals in a magenta pink and delightful lilac staining 'bleeding' into the top of the stem.

Each year 6,000 tulip bulbs are planted in a trench in November and oversown with Pictorial Meadow seed by mid-May. Once the tulips have finished, the annual meadow flower mix will flourish until late autumn, retaining the form of the spiral.



Upward spiral

The tulip display at Forde Abbey in Somerset gets bigger and better every year, with later-flowering cultivars intermingling effortlessly with annuals, biennials and perennials to enrich the planting in this progressive historic garden

WORDS **HANNAH GARDNER** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

The brilliant tulip displays at Forde Abbey peak in late April. There are tulips that flower earlier than this, but head gardener Joshua Sparkes selects primarily mid- to late-flowering cultivars to allow the perennial, annual and biennial plants surrounding the bulbs to establish fresh foliage and occasionally flowers, to enrich the naturalistic feel of the spring displays.

An ancient stone abbey nestled in the flood plain of the River Exe amid the mellow rolling hills of south Somerset is at the heart of this magnificent family estate. Founded by Cistercian monks around 900 years ago, it has been a home since 1649 and is surrounded by interesting gardens landscaped first by the monks and again during the 18th century.

Forde Abbey garden first opened a generation ago. The current custodians, Alice and Julian Kennard, ensure that the space retains a sense of charm and intimacy while welcoming visitors throughout the year with open gates. A tour of the garden initially takes in a productive, walled kitchen garden, and narrow but abundant borders under the leaded windows of the house, then an arboretum full of interesting Asian species (the pale-lemon magnolia spectacular in spring) and a gnarly rock garden. The circuit continues past atmospheric planting and formal ponds, through undulating meadows to reach the calm expanse of the great monastic pond and adjacent bog garden.

Tulips at Forde Abbey have increased twofold every season in recent years. Joshua arrived in spring 2018 from Sissinghurst Castle, having trained under pioneering head gardener Troy Scott Smith. He has since travelled around the globe on the Great Gardens of the World TRIAD Fellowship, gathering up horticultural knowledge and innovative ideas and methodology.

Sustainability lies at the heart of Forde Abbey's naturalistic aesthetic. A holistic approach to soil health underpins every aspect of horticulture here, with a commitment to avoiding pesticides, fungicides and artificial fertilisers. The ancient (unimproved) meadows are biodiverse and drought tolerant, and horticultural practices are built to nurture the microbiology that supports plant health. Potting-shed staples include incorporating raw biochar, a stable form of carbon that improves soil quality, repeated applications of compost tea and worm composting. Green manures are sown widely to improve soil structure and nutrition, the mustard crop naturally fumigating the soil helping eradicate any pests.

With the exception of The Swirl and four blocks in the walled garden that frame the main entrance path, the focus has shifted away from annual bedding displays to focus on integrating bulbs into the perennial borders. Joshua has an instinctive feel for informal groupings, happily mixing species, heights and colour. Each season an additional 30 to 40 per cent of the bulbs are planted from new stock, a measure that ensures continuity of flowering and adjusts the balance as necessary. Moving through the garden, clusters of borders are planted with the same bulb mix, creating a particular atmosphere. A bohemian air of informality pervades: sultry, dark tulips push up through cracked flagstones, and self-sown seedlings are celebrated and given space to breathe. The resulting compositions are a gorgeous riot of wallflowers, narcissiulips, hyacinths and flowering kale 'Red Russian', with the leafy promise of perennials to follow in summer.

A wide range of biennials is used extensively. Often planted as plug plants at the same time as the bulbs in November, they are the thread that pulls the perennial compositions together throughout the seasons. They are valued for their early season foliage (the soft, silvery rosettes of *Verbascum* and neat yet fleshy leaves of juvenile foxgloves) and later for their additional colour, scent (especially *Hesperis matronalis*), romantic and naturalistic habit, and decorative seeds, most notably in the case of honesty, which produces flat, round, silvery seedpods after flowering, and woad (*Isatis tinctoria*), with its lofty, yellow cloud of flowers followed by ink-black seedpods.

The tulips in The Swirl are showcased by a foil of fresh grass. Low-growing *T. saxatilis* 'Lilac Wonder' grows among drifts of buttercups and bluebells in the meadow, an occasional flash of glossy gold and lilac petals glistening in the spring sunshine. The woodland tulip *T. sylvestris* enjoys the hinterland of the woodland edge. These small, botanical tulip bulbs are planted using the technique pioneered by William Robinson (author of *The Wild Garden*, 1870), which involves removing a cylinder of soil with a bulb planter, dropping a few bulbs into the hole, flipping the turf and replacing it soil side up, with the opportunity to scatter a few yellow rattle or other wildflower seeds on to the exposed turf.

The last of all the tulips to flower in late May and early June is the elegant and unmarked scarlet species *T. sprengeri*, now thought to be extinct in the wild. Appreciative of a little shade and deep soil that retains some moisture through the summer, it is found dwelling here and there in the shadow of some of the deciduous trees in this beautifully curated, historic landscape. ◻

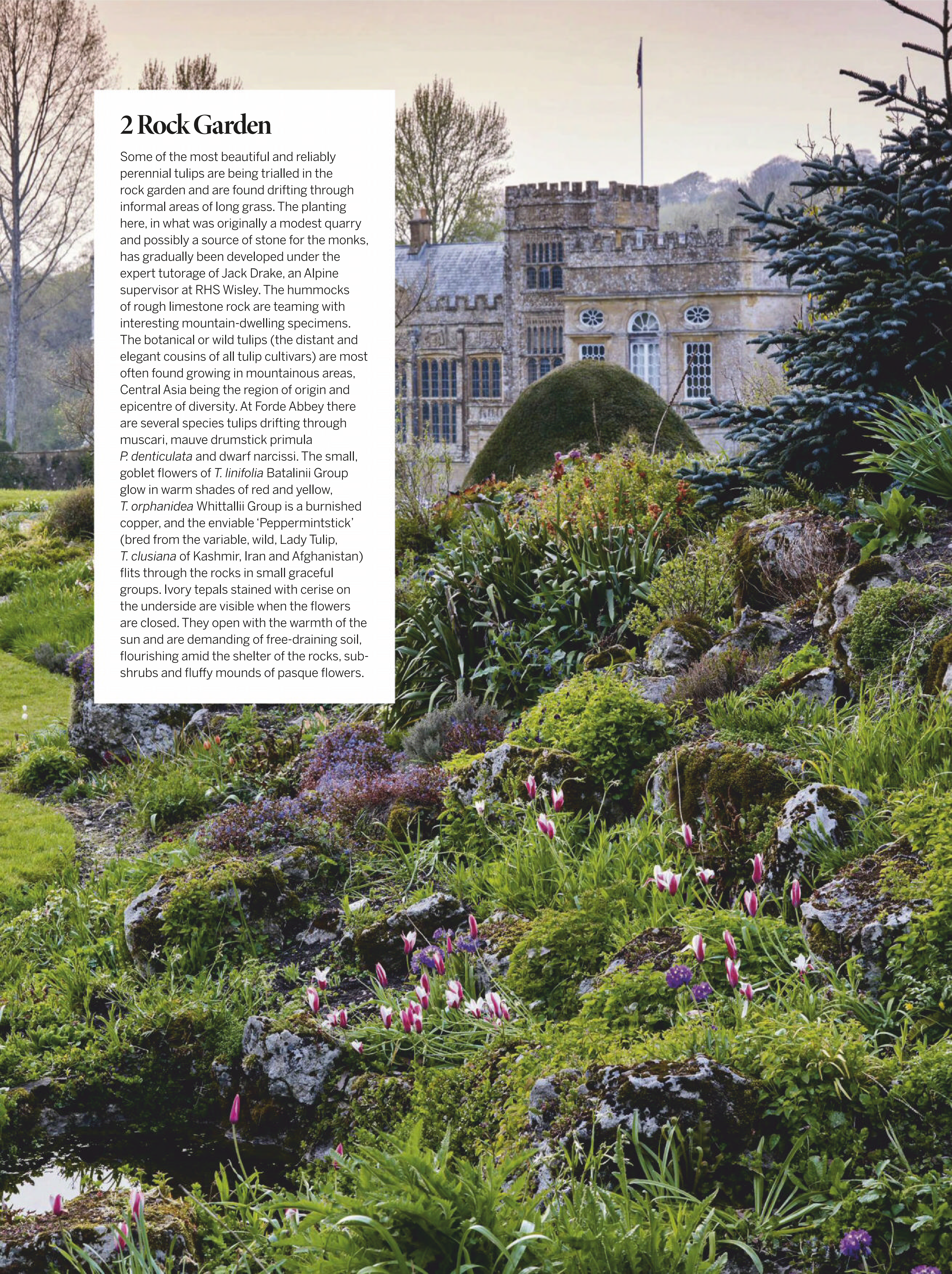
USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Forde Abbey, Chard, Somerset TA20 4LU.
Tel 01460 220231 **Web** fordeabbey.co.uk
Open Gardens open daily, 10am-4pm, admission £15.

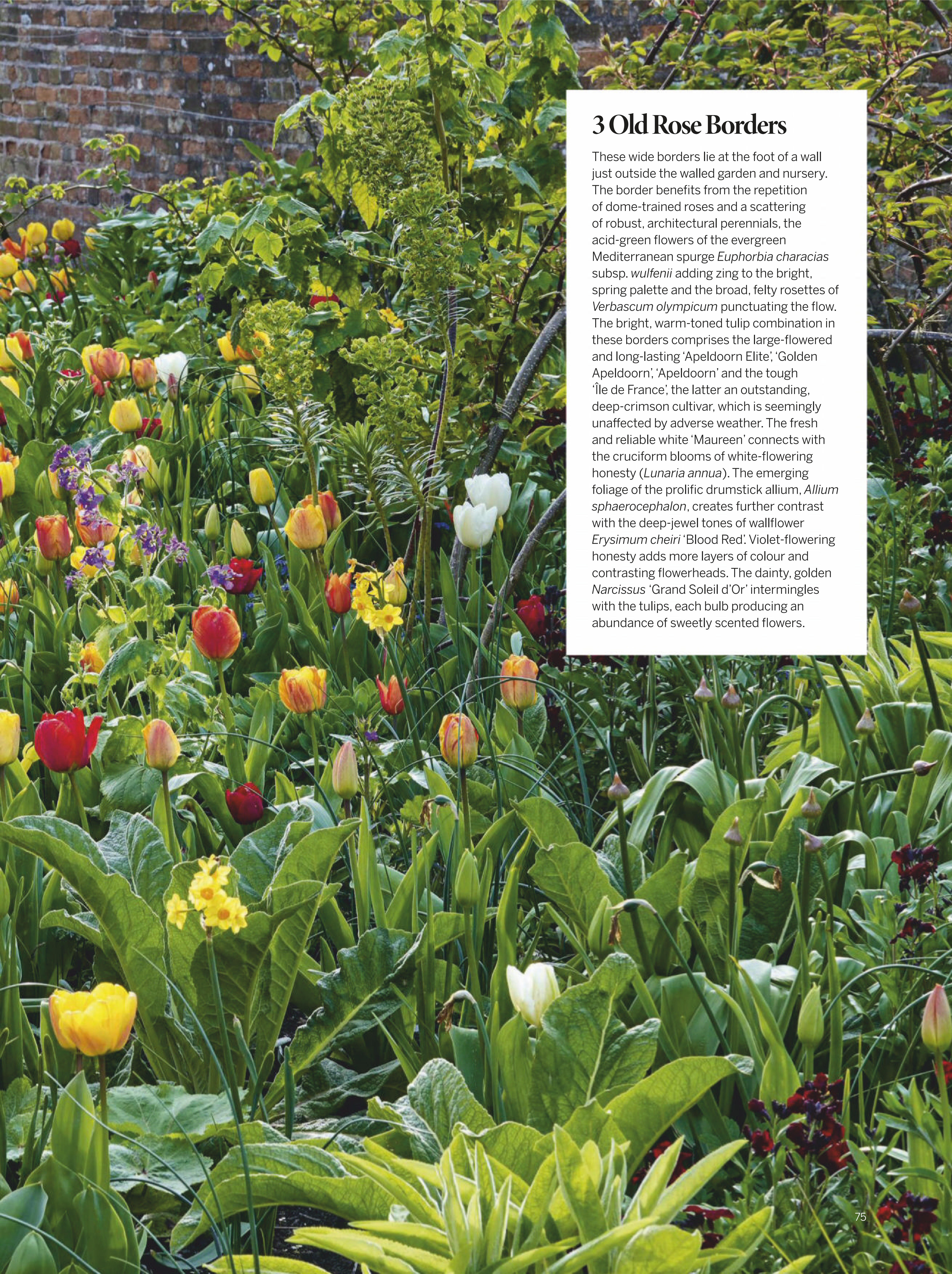
Turn the page to continue ▷

2 Rock Garden

Some of the most beautiful and reliably perennial tulips are being trialled in the rock garden and are found drifting through informal areas of long grass. The planting here, in what was originally a modest quarry and possibly a source of stone for the monks, has gradually been developed under the expert tutorage of Jack Drake, an Alpine supervisor at RHS Wisley. The hummocks of rough limestone rock are teaming with interesting mountain-dwelling specimens. The botanical or wild tulips (the distant and elegant cousins of all tulip cultivars) are most often found growing in mountainous areas, Central Asia being the region of origin and epicentre of diversity. At Forde Abbey there are several species tulips drifting through muscari, mauve drumstick primula *P. denticulata* and dwarf narcissi. The small, goblet flowers of *T. linifolia* Batalinii Group glow in warm shades of red and yellow, *T. orphanidea* Whittallii Group is a burnished copper, and the enviable 'Peppermintstick' (bred from the variable, wild, Lady Tulip, *T. clusiana* of Kashmir, Iran and Afghanistan) flits through the rocks in small graceful groups. Ivory tepals stained with cerise on the underside are visible when the flowers are closed. They open with the warmth of the sun and are demanding of free-draining soil, flourishing amid the shelter of the rocks, sub-shrubs and fluffy mounds of pasque flowers.



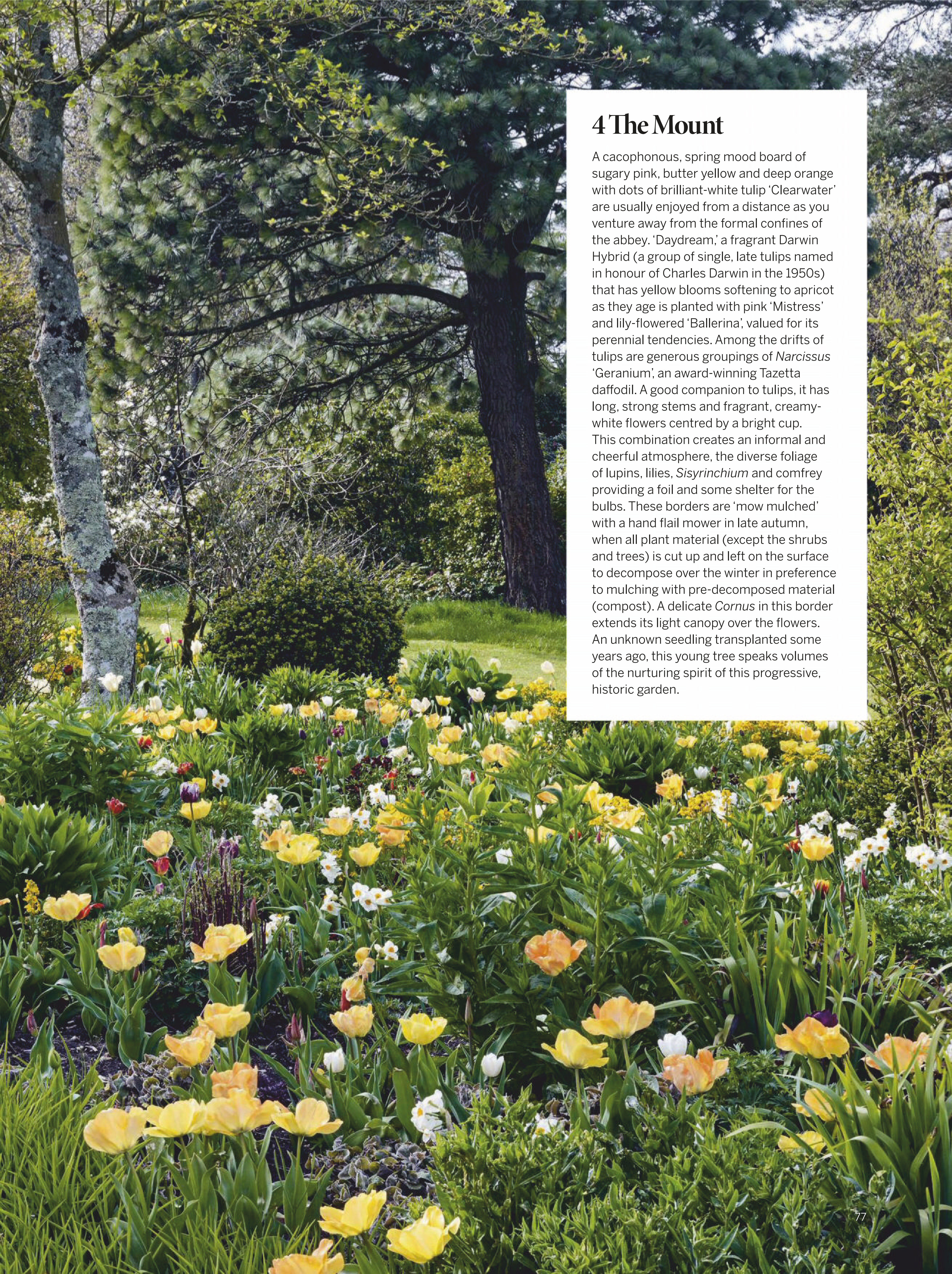
Joshua has an instinctive feel for informal groupings, happily mixing species, height and colour



3 Old Rose Borders

These wide borders lie at the foot of a wall just outside the walled garden and nursery. The border benefits from the repetition of dome-trained roses and a scattering of robust, architectural perennials, the acid-green flowers of the evergreen Mediterranean spurge *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* adding zing to the bright, spring palette and the broad, felty rosettes of *Verbascum olympicum* punctuating the flow. The bright, warm-toned tulip combination in these borders comprises the large-flowered and long-lasting 'Apeldoorn Elite', 'Golden Apeldoorn', 'Apeldoorn' and the tough 'Île de France', the latter an outstanding, deep-crimson cultivar, which is seemingly unaffected by adverse weather. The fresh and reliable white 'Maureen' connects with the cruciform blooms of white-flowering honesty (*Lunaria annua*). The emerging foliage of the prolific drumstick allium, *Allium sphaerocephalon*, creates further contrast with the deep-jewel tones of wallflower *Erysimum cheiri* 'Blood Red'. Violet-flowering honesty adds more layers of colour and contrasting flowerheads. The dainty, golden *Narcissus* 'Grand Soleil d'Or' intermingles with the tulips, each bulb producing an abundance of sweetly scented flowers.

The focus has shifted away from annual bedding displays to focus on integrating bulbs into the perennial borders



4 The Mount

A cacophonous, spring mood board of sugary pink, butter yellow and deep orange with dots of brilliant-white tulip 'Clearwater' are usually enjoyed from a distance as you venture away from the formal confines of the abbey. 'Daydream,' a fragrant Darwin Hybrid (a group of single, late tulips named in honour of Charles Darwin in the 1950s) that has yellow blooms softening to apricot as they age is planted with pink 'Mistress' and lily-flowered 'Ballerina', valued for its perennial tendencies. Among the drifts of tulips are generous groupings of *Narcissus* 'Geranium', an award-winning Tazetta daffodil. A good companion to tulips, it has long, strong stems and fragrant, creamy-white flowers centred by a bright cup. This combination creates an informal and cheerful atmosphere, the diverse foliage of lupins, lilies, *Sisyrinchium* and comfrey providing a foil and some shelter for the bulbs. These borders are 'mow mulched' with a hand flail mower in late autumn, when all plant material (except the shrubs and trees) is cut up and left on the surface to decompose over the winter in preference to mulching with pre-decomposed material (compost). A delicate *Cornus* in this border extends its light canopy over the flowers. An unknown seedling transplanted some years ago, this young tree speaks volumes of the nurturing spirit of this progressive, historic garden.

Flower power

This summer sit back and let the grass grow, as a new campaign encourages gardeners to leave their mowers in the shed and transform their lawns into havens of biodiversity

WORDS **DAISY BOWIE-SELL** ILLUSTRATION **LESLEY BUCKINGHAM**

The warming weather signals the point in the year when gardeners are able to turn their attentions back to their lawns, with regular mowing transforming a scrappy patch into an orderly sea of green.

The connection between mowing and the beginning of the gardening season is deeply entrenched in the psyche of gardeners, which is why No Mow May – the idea of avoiding mowing in May, suggested by charity Plantlife – is quietly revolutionary. Over the colder months, lawn maintenance mainly involves ensuring that mower blades are clean and sharp. But once spring begins to break through, regular cutting is high on the agenda. May is the window to summer and the point at which the once-dormant grass starts to shoot up in earnest and mowing traditionally gets under way. Most gardeners are desperate to get out and start chopping, and Plantlife's recent survey of 2,000 gardeners revealed that most of us mow once every two weeks.

The reason for thinking twice about our mowing habits comes down to stark facts. According to a report in the journal *Biological Conservation*, 97 per cent of British wildflower meadows have disappeared since the 1930s. A recent study published in the journal *Nature Communications* shows that many British pollinating insects are in decline, with rarer species, such as the red-shanked carder bee, really struggling. Between 1980 and 2013, every square kilometre in the UK lost an average of 11 species of bee and hoverfly. The reasons behind this are the use of insecticides, habitat loss and an overall reduction in biodiversity. Plantlife believes that people's gardens can play a vital part in reversing this trend.

And it's not just a belief: there's now proof. Following the launch of No Mow May in 2019, figures show that if you mow less, the pollen count on your lawn can skyrocket. The charity's citizen science experiment asked people to leave their mowers in the shed for May and count the flower species that subsequently popped up in a one-square-metre patch of their lawn. The results are indisputable: changing the way we mow can result in a tenfold increase in the amount of nectar available to bees and other pollinators. The new mowing regime saw an increase in the growth of daisies, germander, speedwell and creeping buttercup. And the species that benefitted changed each month – after

▷

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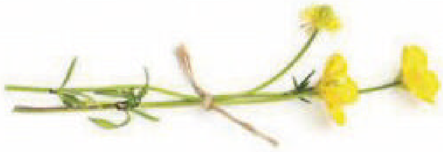
Mowing tips for encouraging wildlife

Cut once every four weeks
The 2019 No Mow May experiment revealed the highest number of flowers on lawns mown in this way. Ideally, leave around three to five centimetres of grass length.

Leave areas of long grass
The experiment also resulted in greater diversity of flowers in areas of grass that were left completely unmown, with oxeye daisy, field scabious and knapweed offering up important nectar sources.

You don't have to stop mowing completely
Some species, such as daisy and bird's foot trefoil, are adapted to growing in shorter swards. Cutting flowers from these plants once a month stimulates them to produce more blooms.



▷ stopping mowing for another month in July, participants saw a resurgence of white clover, selfheal and bird's foot trefoil. The average square-metre patch of lawn surveyed after the experiment produced enough nectar to support almost four honey bees per day.

For Plantlife's botanist Trevor Dines, it's a case of changing the way we all think about how we control our gardens. "It's time for people to relax a little bit," he says. "Avoiding mowing in this way means that instead of a dull monoculture of green concrete, your garden will be thriving and full of interest. I don't think people realise how diverse our lawns can be."

And the option to continue as we have been is not really a viable one. "The statistics for wildflower meadow loss are shocking: around 7.5 million acres have gone," says Trevor. He describes how a colleague's grandfather used to walk from Stratford-upon-Avon to Birmingham as a boy and not leave a wildflower meadow. "The loss of this landscape means a loss of food source for pollinators, which is one of the key drivers of their decline."

It's not necessary, either, to simply leave your garden to the elements. The ultimate concept of No Mow May is not really to stop mowing in May specifically, or to leave whole swathes of your lawn unmown. Behind the catchy title is a simple concept: get people to change their habits so that they mow less – ideally once a month – and possibly even leave a patch or two of grass to grow long.

Gardens can really make a difference to the number of wildflowers in this country. As Trevor says: "We've lost the mosaic of meadows from the countryside but at least within our gardens we can do something in response to that." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

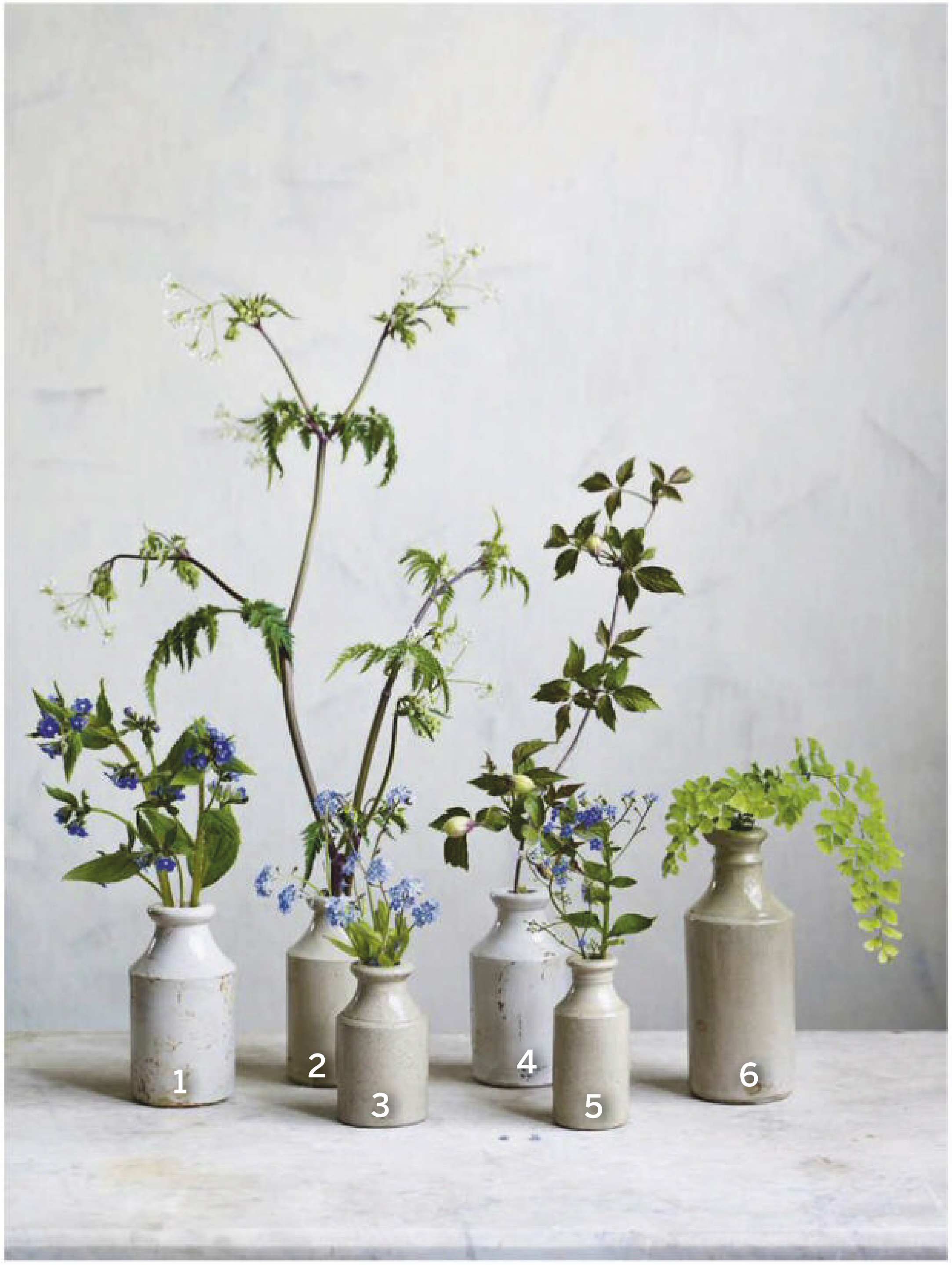
How to take part in No Mow May

- Register for Every Flower Counts at **plantlife.org.uk**
- Leave your mower in the shed from 23 to 31 May and again from 11 to 19 July.
- At the end of each period, throw a tennis ball into a patch of your lawn, mark out a square metre with sticks around the ball and count and identify the flowers in that square and then upload your findings.

LIVING WORKS OF ART

The Victorian art of pot-et-fleur, combining living house plants with cut flowers, is enjoying a revival and allows you to create beautiful and sustainable floral arrangements without the need for floral foam

WORDS JACKY MILLS PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

I love using wildflowers in naturalistic floral arrangements and grow as many as possible in my own garden so that I am free to pick as desired. This arrangement was inspired by a walk down my local country lanes in May where the hedgerows are lined with billowing clouds of cow parsley, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, exuding a light and airy feel. I've combined this iconic umbellifer with several *Adiantum* ferns and a trio of blues from the borage family to add some sparkle to the mix.

How to achieve the look

This handsome wooden crate houses ten chunky soda bottles, but for this display I replaced seven of them with maidenhair ferns in 1L pots and three with cut flowers in glass vases, anchoring the arrangement with a row of Victorian clay ink pots.

A selection of tall, cow parsley stems adds height, and I picked those with the darkest purple stems to match the rose-flushed buds of the *Clematis montana*. These provide a link to the almost-black stems of the maidenhair fern, whose fresh virescent tones add a sense of depth to the display.

Green alkanet, *Pentaglottis sempervirens,* and Siberian bugloss, *Brunnera macrophylla,* provide a drift of bright blue that is subtly enhanced by the chalkier blue of forget-me-not, *Myosotis sylvatica*. This arrangement will last nearly two weeks in a cool conservatory out of direct sunlight with regular misting and changes of water in the vases. The ferns appreciate high humidity and should be kept well watered during the growing season.

All the flowers used in this display are prolific self-seeders so need careful management to stop them taking over your garden. The hairy leaved alkanet can be found flowering along woodland edges so is happy in part shade while the bugloss makes a great groundcover plant. I cut both hard back in June and July, after their initial flowering to refresh and keep them in check. *Myosotis sylvatica* also copes well with shade, readily seeding about but is easy to pull out where not required.

Plants

1 *Pentaglottis sempervirens* A perennial herb. Flowers April to July. 70cm. RHS H6[†].
2 *Anthriscus sylvestris* Cow parsley. Flowers April to May. 1.7m. RHS H6.
3 *Myosotis sylvatica* A short-lived perennial or biennial. April to June. 3cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.
4 *Clematis montana* A vigorous deciduous climber. March to June. 12m. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
5 *Brunnera macrophylla* Siberian bugloss, a hardy perennial. April to July. 40cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.
6 *Adiantum raddianum* 'Fragrantissimum' Tender evergreen fern with black stems and lime-green leaves. 50cm. USDA 8a-11.

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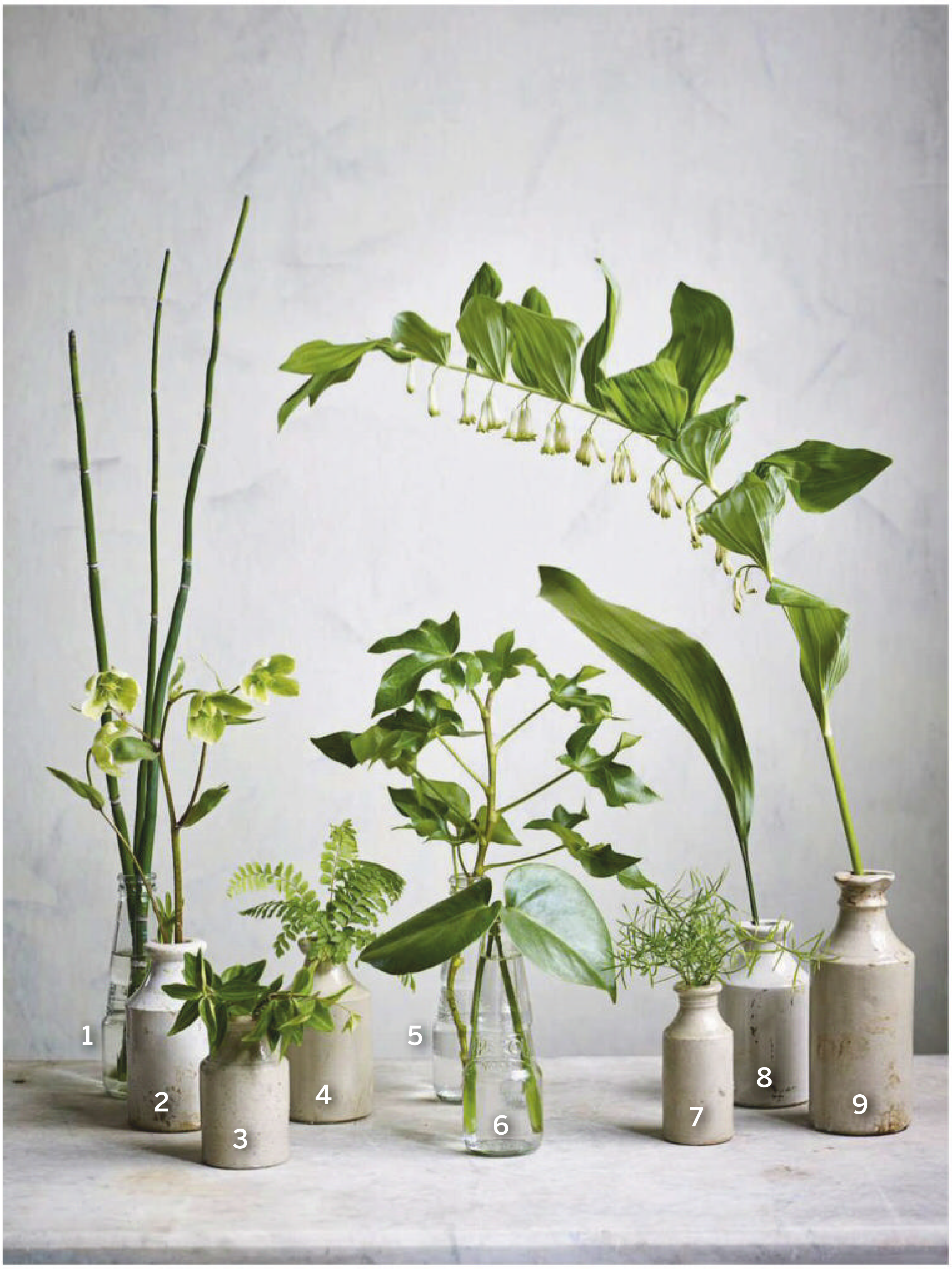
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†]Hardiness ratings given where available.



How to achieve the look

A glazed Victorian wash bowl, is ideal for this flamboyant display. It has no drainage holes, so won't leak on to furniture, but will need careful watering. To begin, I lined the bowl with expanded clay pellets to absorb excess water then added a propriety houseplant compost mixed with extra charcoal. I placed the houseplants in the compost but kept the cheese plant (*Monstera deliciosa*) in its own pot for ease of removal, as it will quickly outgrow the display. Finally, I sank four thin-necked glass vases in the gaps, before top dressing with additional clay pellets.

The aspidistra copes well with shade, as do the other houseplants, inlcuding x *Fatshedera lizei* 'Pia', a cross between *Fatsia japonica* and *Hedera helix*. I placed two trailing peperomia at the front of the bowl to cascade over the lip. For foliar contrast I added a maidenhair and an asparagus fern.

The clean lines of the polygonatum's tall, arching stems embellished with pendent flowers sits perfectly above the fading flowers of *Helleborus* x *sahinii* 'Winterbells', which take on a greener hue with age. The ridged, clean stems of *Equisetum hyemale* add a vertical contrast to the composition.

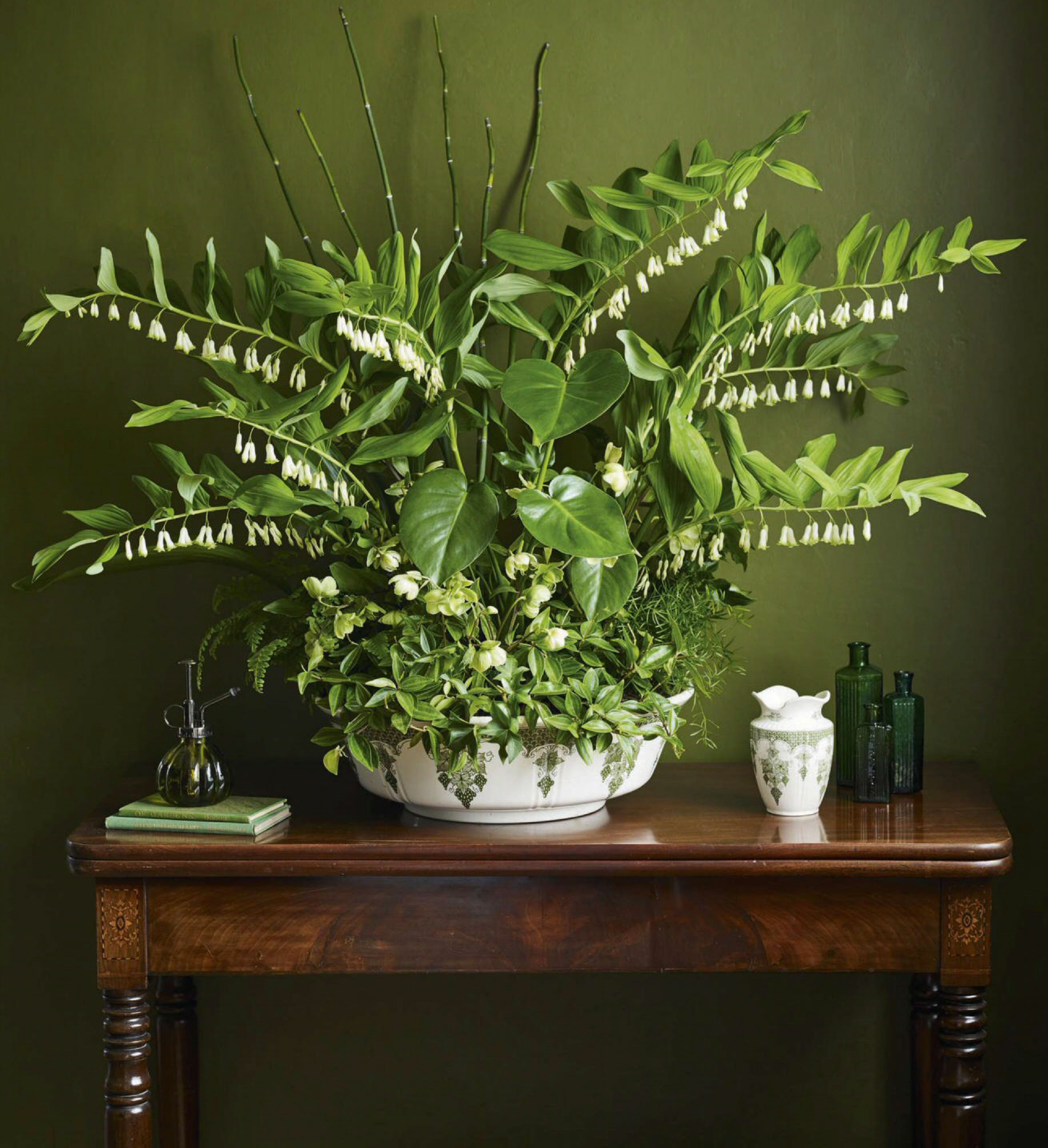
The arrangement needs a spot away from direct sunlight and regular misting. Overwatering is often the cause of a plant's demise, so always check the compost before watering. If you don't trust your finger use a water indication stick. Houseplants benefit from a weekly balanced liquid feed in the growing season, but too much nitrogen can lead to weak sappy growth.

Plants

1 *Equisetum hyemale* Evergreen, marginal plant. 90cm. USDA 4a-9b.
2 *Helleborus* x *sahinii* 'Winterbells' January to April. 30cm. USDA 4a-9b.
3 *Peperomia* 'Rocca Verde' South American trailing plant. 15cm.
4 *Adiantum hispidulum* 'Bronze Venus' Rosy maidenhair fern. 45cm.
5 x *Fatshedera lizei* 'Pia' The ivy tree. 2m. AGM*. RHS H3, USDA 7a-10b.
6 *Monstera deliciosa* Cheese plant. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-12.
7 *Asparagus aethiopicus* Asparagus fern. 30cm. AGM.
8 *Aspidistra elatior* Sometimes known as the cast iron plant. 70cm.
9 *Polygonatum* x *hybridum* A tall perennial. April to June. 90cm.

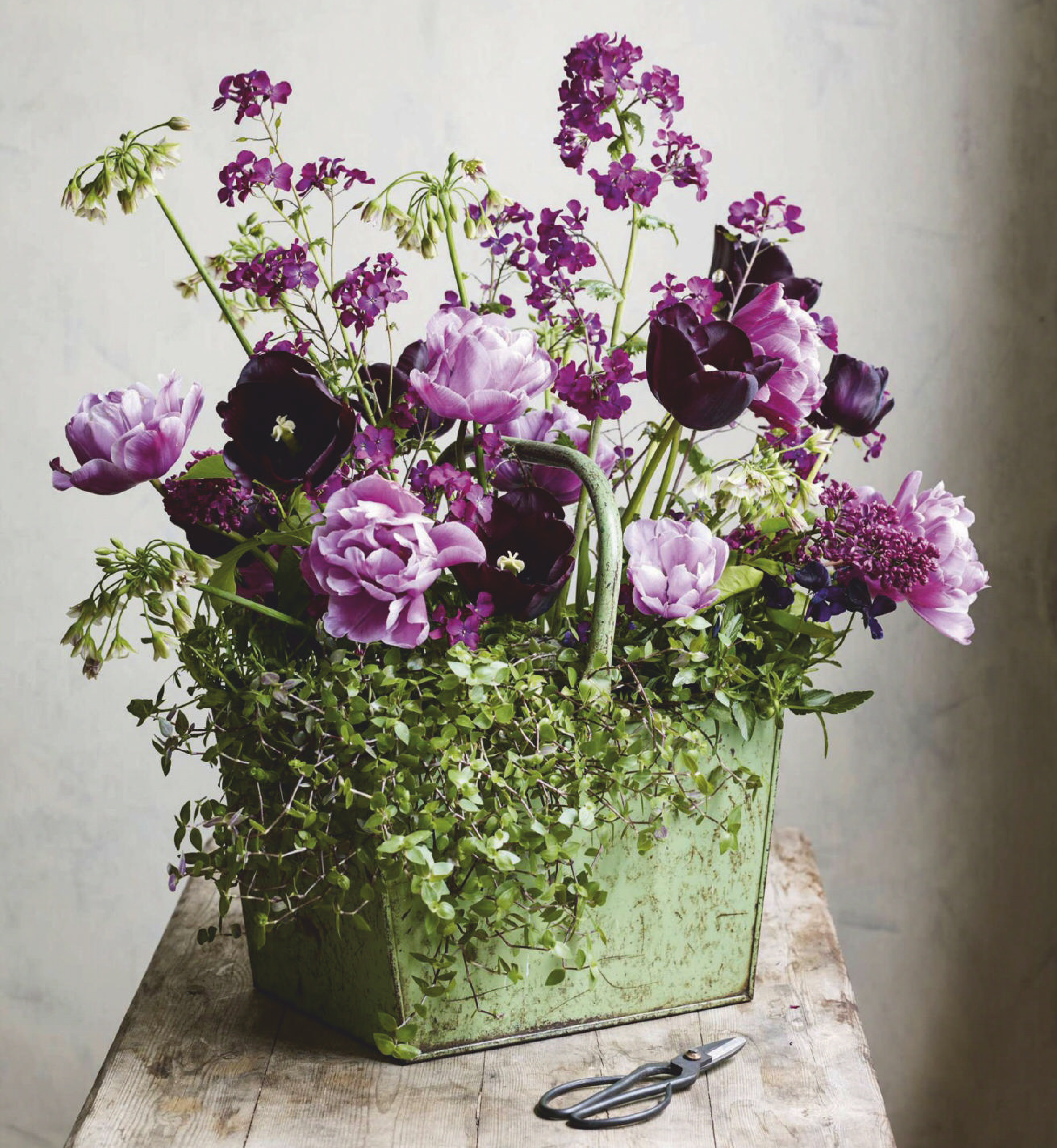
FLAMBOYANT SPLENDOUR

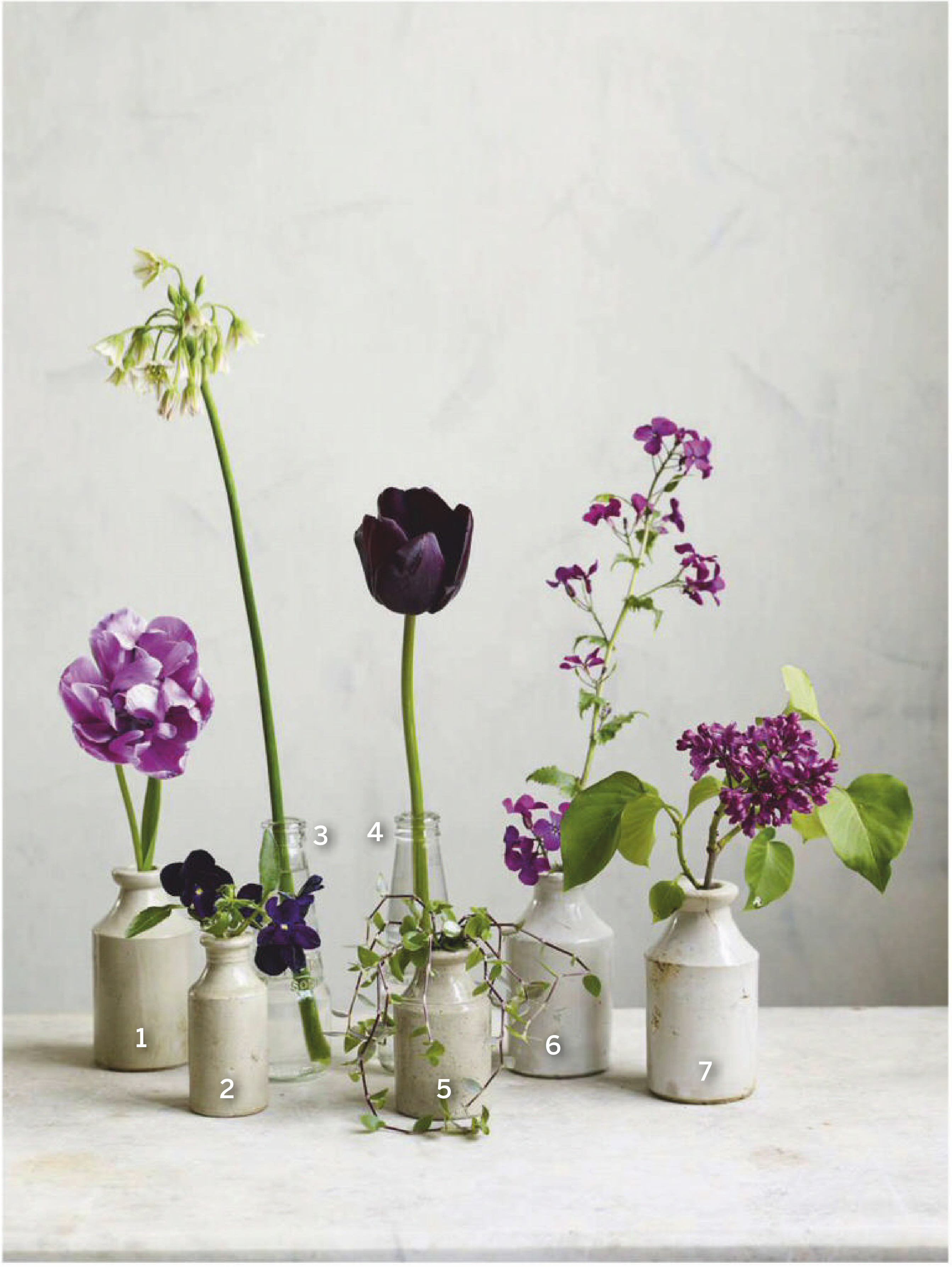
The Victorians loved to show off, and table centrepieces became increasingly extravagant throughout the 19th century, often displaying a cornucopia of newly introduced houseplants teamed with exotic blooms and fruit. I wanted to capture a little of that dark and moody flamboyancy against the rich olive green of this wall. The arrangement was built around an aspidistra, the epitome of Victorian houseplants, combined with a selection of deep-green plants with similar and contrasting leaf textures.



RETRO CHIC

I instantly fell for this 1950s housekeeper's caddy. The removable top tray reveals a deep bucket that is perfect for showcasing all manner of flower combinations. Strong, bright colours work particularly well against the scuffed paintwork. I tried to use foliage with a similar glaucous green throughout the planting to unify the arrangement.





How to achieve the look

To create this fresh-looking spring display I removed the top tray from the bucket and placed a wide, elliptical glass vase diagonally across the base. At the bottom of the vase I secured two small metal pin holders with horticultural putty, and then filled the void around the vase with clay pellets before sinking the *Callisia repens* and two violas (in their pots) in opposite corners. *Callisia repens* is a vigorous trailing plant used here as a foundation for the colourful spring flowers, and I like the way the stem colour blends with the scratches on the box.

The dark-purple petals of the viola complement the velvety black intensity of *Tulipa* 'Paul Scherer' combined with the more flamboyant *T.* 'Blue Diamond' an opulent late double tulip. Splashes of intense magenta come from a dark-flowered *Lunaria annua* and lilac sprigs from a friend's garden. A drift of striped, dangling bells of *Allium siculum* are threaded throughout.

The callisia prefers warmth and humidity but not direct sunlight, so water and mist regularly. Deadhead the violas frequently to encourage flowering. The tulips will benefit from a good soak prior to arranging, but don't be too concerned about straight stems, the tulips' natural tendency to curve just adds to the charm.

Seasonal flowers work so much better in these arrangements, and I have tried to include flowers that can be grown in a garden or are easy to source. Buy locally wherever possible, as naturally grown flowers have so much more appeal, stamina and character.

Plants

1 *Tulipa* 'Blue Diamond' A fragrant, double, late tulip. April to May. 40cm.
2 *Viola* 'Roscastle Black' Clump-forming viola, prefers cool shade. April to October. 25cm.
3 *Allium siculum* A deciduous, bulbous perennial topped with an umbel of bell-shaped flowers beloved by bees. May to July. 1.5m.
4 *Tulipa* 'Paul Scherer' An almost black tulip. April to May. 50cm. AGM.
5 *Callisia repens* A tender, evergreen vigorous trailing houseplant. 45cm.
6 *Lunaria annua* Biennial honesty. April to May. 90cm.
7 *Syringa vulgaris* 'Andenken an Ludwig Späth' Purple lilac. April to May. 4m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

What you'll need

Traditionally, ornate punch bowls or soup tureens were used to hold elaborate, pot-et-fleur designs but any container could be adapted for a more contemporary approach including terracotta and ceramic bowls, willow baskets, glass aquariums or metal boxes, but if it's not water tight, you'll need to take care to protect the surface it sits on.

Within the main container you can use any sealed vessel to hold the cut flowers but if it will be partially visible, opt for more attractive containers, such as old ink pots or vintage glass bottles that have a wide base and thin neck. Glass test tubes are a good option but take care when burying them in case they break, and always secure safely.

A pin holder is an excellent way of accurately securing heavy stems. These discs of metal spikes are much relied on in the practice of *ikebana*, the Japanese art of flower arranging, lending a more naturalistic feel to an arrangement. I also use several heavy, semi-spherical glass frogs to hold flowers and branch stems. Be sure to attach both of these securely to the base of the vase with floral putty or tape before arranging. A length of wide-gauge chicken wire scrunched into a loose ball will do a similar job. Sharp scissors or secateurs are also essential bits of kit; thorn and leaf strippers are useful too.

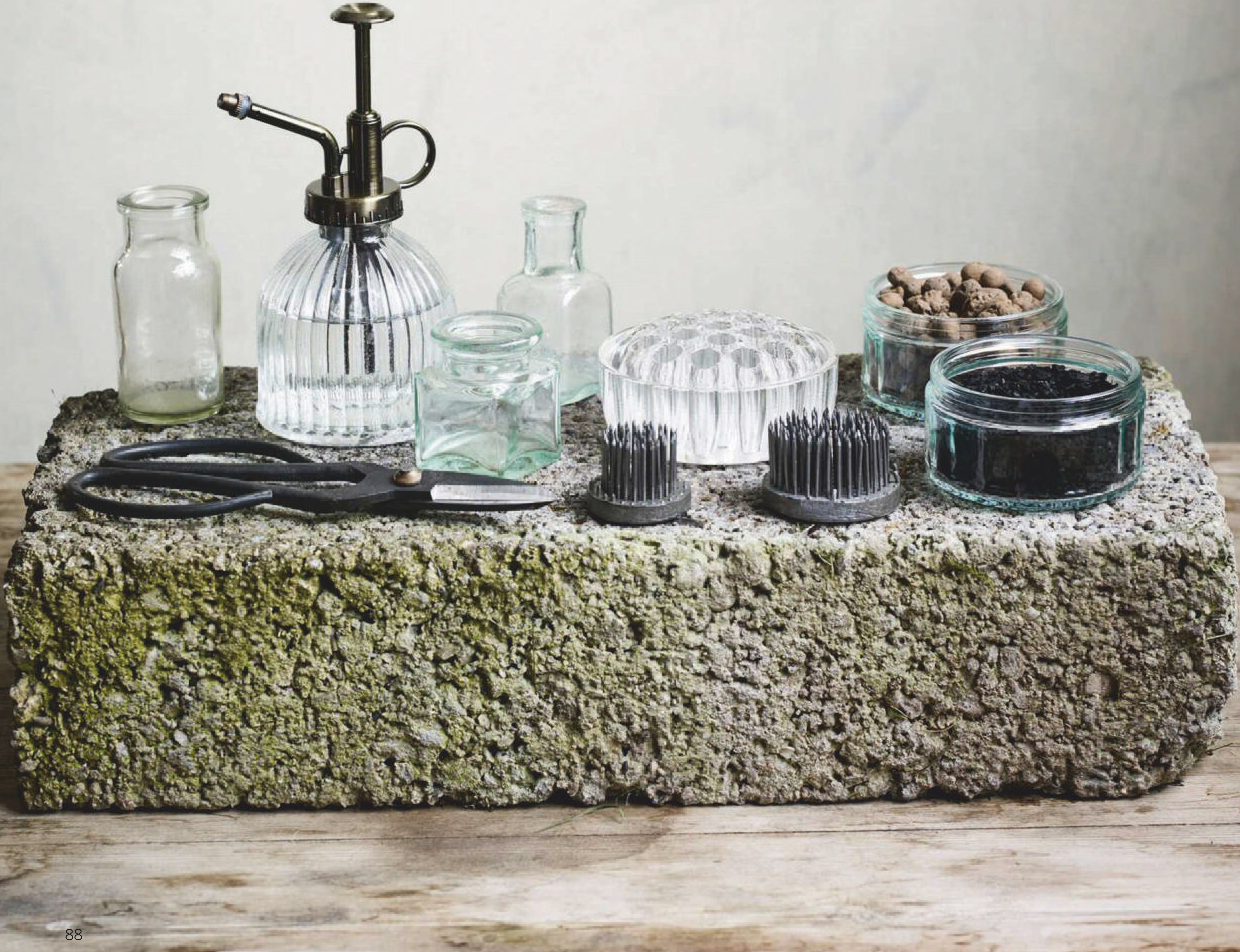
Before you start arranging your cut flowers, snip off the ends of picked stems and remove any foliage that will be below the water level and leave in deep water for up to 24 hours. Regularly topping up water levels or changing the water entirely every couple of days will help the arrangement last longer as air locks and bacteria will quickly cause a stem to wilt.

Houseplants are easily killed through overwatering, so using hydroleca clay expanded pellets will not only add an attractive finish to the container, they will also absorb extra water, slowly releasing it as the compost dries out. They help maintain a humid microclimate around the plants when wet and even out fluctuations in the surrounding temperature. Activated charcoal is another useful addition to the growing medium as it reduces the build up of impurities minimising odours.

Propriety brands of houseplant potting compost with an open, free-draining mix should be sufficient for most growing needs but you can improve drainage by adding perlite, vermiculite, horticultural sand or grit. A top dressing of decorative gravel, clay pellets or moss will also reduce water loss.

A slim watering can with a long narrow spout for small spaces is ideal for these displays, but misting is an excellent way to maintain the humidity around plant leaves.

• For stockists visit **gardensillustrated.com**



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IN BRIEF

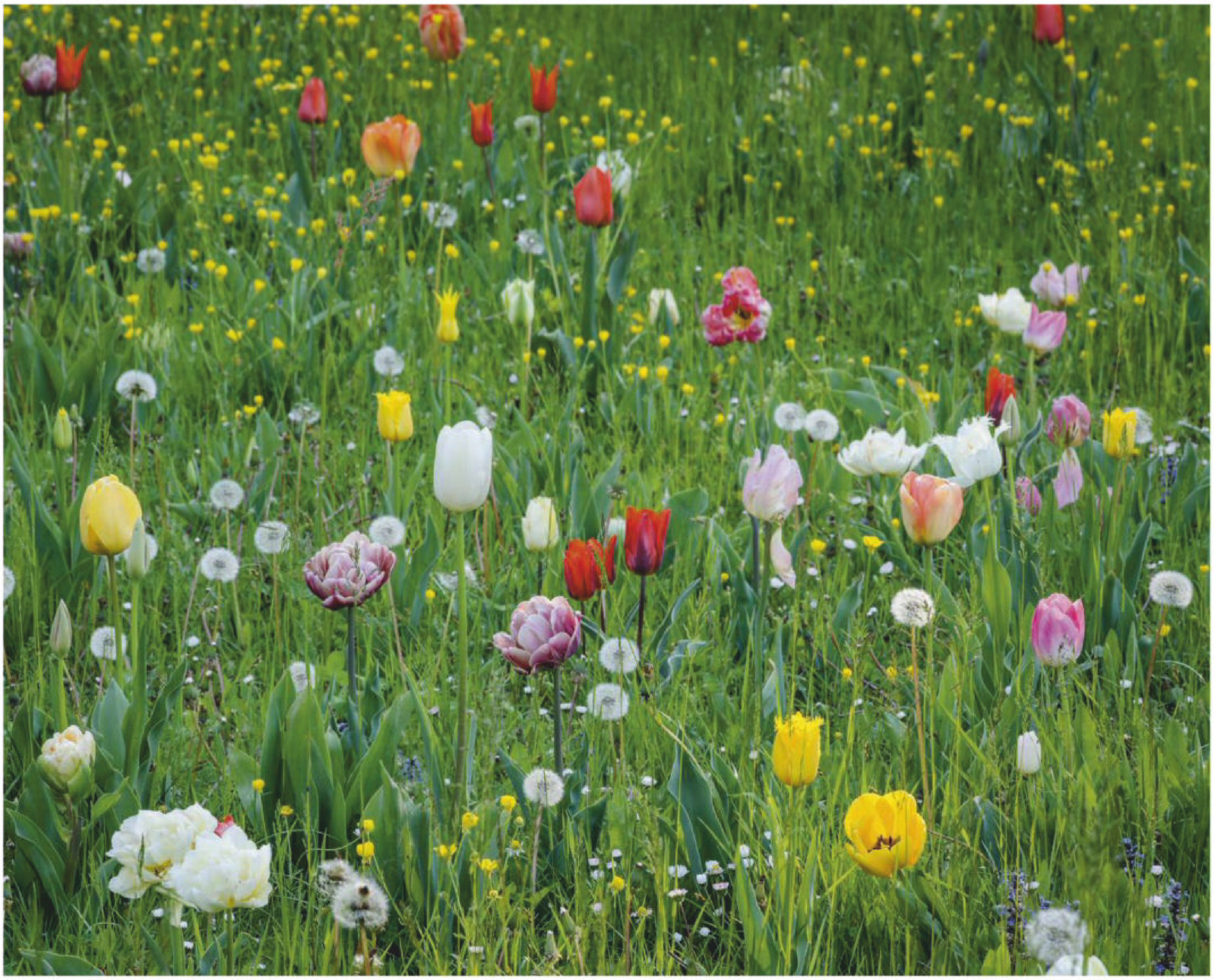
Name Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin.
What A wildflower meadow filled with over 120 tulip cultivars.
Where Northeast Italy.
Size Approximately five acres, ten per cent formal garden, 20 per cent open flower meadow, and 70 per cent wooded area.
Soil Heavy clay in the garden and meadow. Approximately four acres of woodland where the soil is moist, friable and fertile.
Climate Humid, hot summers (temperatures reach and exceed 40°C in July and August). Cold, damp winters with frost and some snow.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

Timeless fashion

Every April the meadow behind Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin, near Padua, is bright with wildflowers and tulips

WORDS **CLARK ANTHONY LAWRENCE** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

In 2016, Mariella Bolognesi Scalabrin had 50,000 tulips planted in the meadow behind her 16th-century villa located between Ferrara and Padua. Thirty thousand more bulbs were added the following year, and every year since then. The result is one of the most spectacular spring garden sights in the Veneto region.



The love of tulips has a long and fascinating history at Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin, beginning in 1852 with the arrival of Evelina van Millingen Pisani, who used to refer to her favourite flowers as her children. Evelina was born in Pera, Constantinople in 1831 and arrived in this part of Italy through her marriage to Almorò III Pisani. Her villa and garden in Vescovana were frequented by the most famous intellectuals and writers of the time, including Henry James.

Exactly which tulip cultivars were planted in the 19th-century garden remains a mystery, but where and when they bloom today is the work of designer Jacqueline van der Kloet, who has collaborated with fellow Dutch designer Piet Oudolf on plant schemes for spring-flowering bulbs for the Lurie Garden in Millennium Park, Chicago, as well as Battery Park, New York.

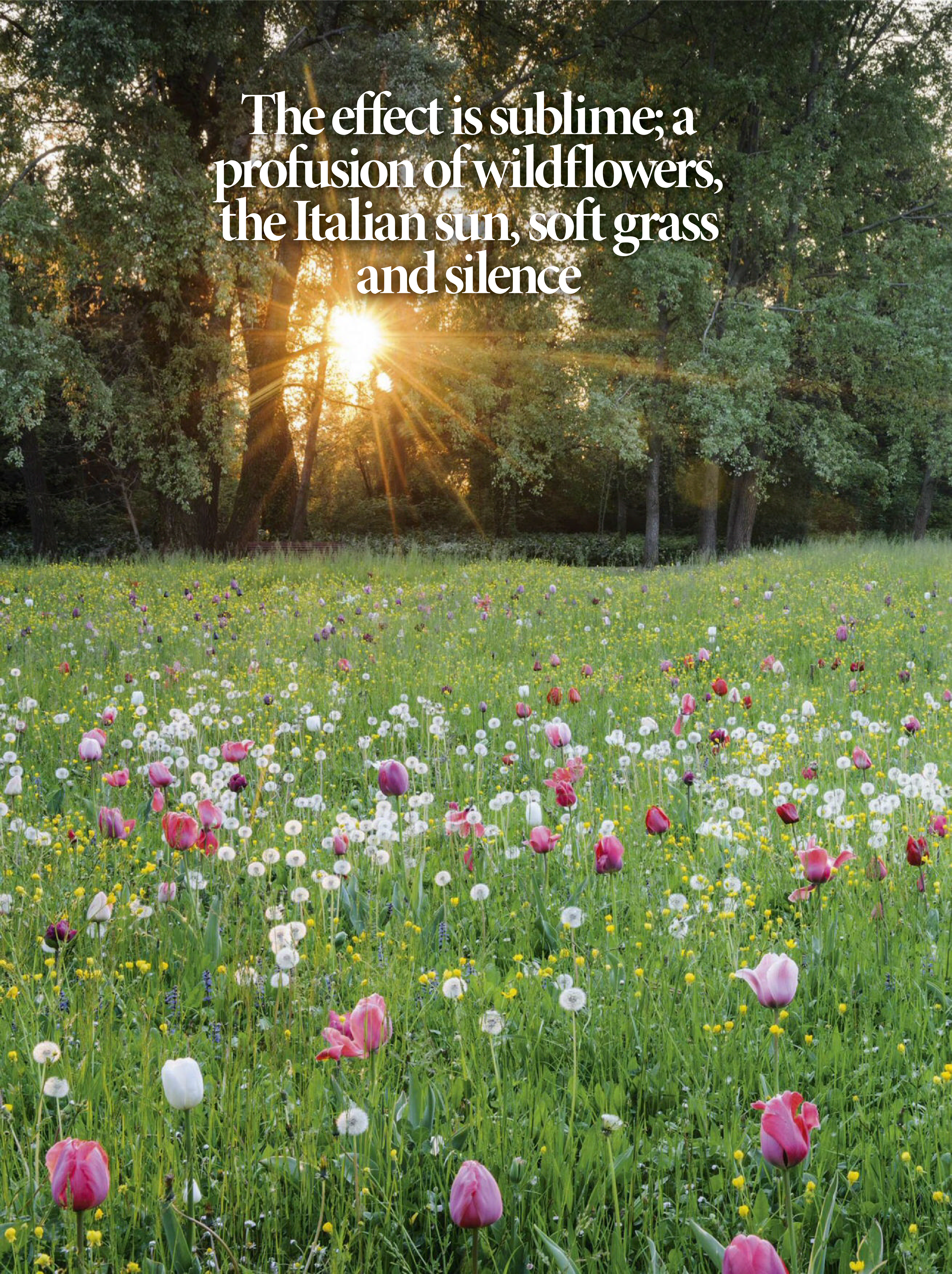
Jacqueline designed the tulip meadow at Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin four years ago. “The idea was to have a naturalistic field, a flower meadow, combining different groups of long-lasting tulips with wildflowers, in various colour combinations per area,” she says. “In November 2016, we planted around 50,000 tulips, facing difficult conditions because the soil was quite heavy and we had to plant in an established meadow. The climate worked well, though, as we could plant late and the first tulips started to bloom in late March.”

Signora Mariella loves the unpruned trees and natural look of the meadow behind her villa. Taking an organic approach, she allows moles to burrow around after worms, grubs and insects in the winter. Mariella orders thousands of bulbs every year from Fred De Meulder. With a catalogue of 463 tulip cultivars, narrowing down the selection is based on trial and error, balancing the blooming periods (early, mid- and late-blooming ▷

Above ‘West Point’ (yellow, lily-flowered tulip with pointed petals), the yellow ‘Golden Apeldoorn’ (a Darwin hybrid crossed with the wild *Tulipa fosteriana*) and ‘Flaming Purissima’ (a Fosteriana tulip, creamy-white with pink).

Right ‘Ronaldo’ (deep maroon-purple), ‘Mistress’(soft pink) and ‘Shirley’ (white, edged with purple).

There are no hard lines or surfaces ; no fences, bricks or cement to stop visitors from stepping where they shouldn't



The effect is sublime; a profusion of wildflowers, the Italian sun, soft grass and silence

Above Jacqueline prefers working with perennial tulips: 'Unique de France' (deep, scarlet-red Triumph class), 'Exotic Emperor' (a double Fosteriana tulip, white with green) and 'Ollioules' (satin rose-pink Darwin Hybrid, fading to white edges).

Left 'Rosalie' (a pastel-pink Triumph cultivar), 'Design Impression' (slightly deeper, Darwin cultivar, salmon with gold flushes and striped leaves) and 'Purple Pride' (violet-purple blooms above grey-green foliage).

▷ tulips) in keeping with Jacqueline's plan. Although they are technically classified as perennials, not all tulips flower year after year, and Jacqueline prefers those she knows will come back, such as 'Ballade' and the elegant, lily-flowered 'White Triumphator'.

The meadow in springtime looks dreamy, wild and free. There are no hard lines or surfaces; no fences, bricks or cement to stop visitors from stepping where they shouldn't. Visitors to the garden are trusted to stay on the mown paths, and they usually do. The soft, natural feel and intimacy of the tulip and wildflower area is what makes this scene so unusual, especially among the more formal gardens of Italy.

Such formal gardens do exist at Villa Pisani; they surround the house, an ancient and private residence with centuries of history etched into its walls. Here stone peacocks and topiary define the more traditional concept of an Italian garden. From these formal gardens, a curved path, leads towards an English-style landscape garden and then on to a woodland walk, bordered on one side by thousands of grape hyacinths, which leads to open fields beyond. Around the meadow, mature trees including poplars, magnolias, plane trees, willows, oaks, lime trees, and conifers create the ideal sylvan backdrop and lead into shaded woodland that envelops the central field. The woods are just deep enough to soften confines. And the overall effect? Sublime – a profusion of wildflowers, the Italian sun, soft grass and silence. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Villa Pisani Bolognesi Scalabrin, Via Roma 25, 35040 Vescovana (Padua), Italy. **Tel** +39 0425.920016 **Web** giardinity.it **Open** Daily throughout the year, see website for seasonal opening times. The spring meadows are at their best from the end of March to around the third week of April, and are open 9am-7pm. Admission €8.

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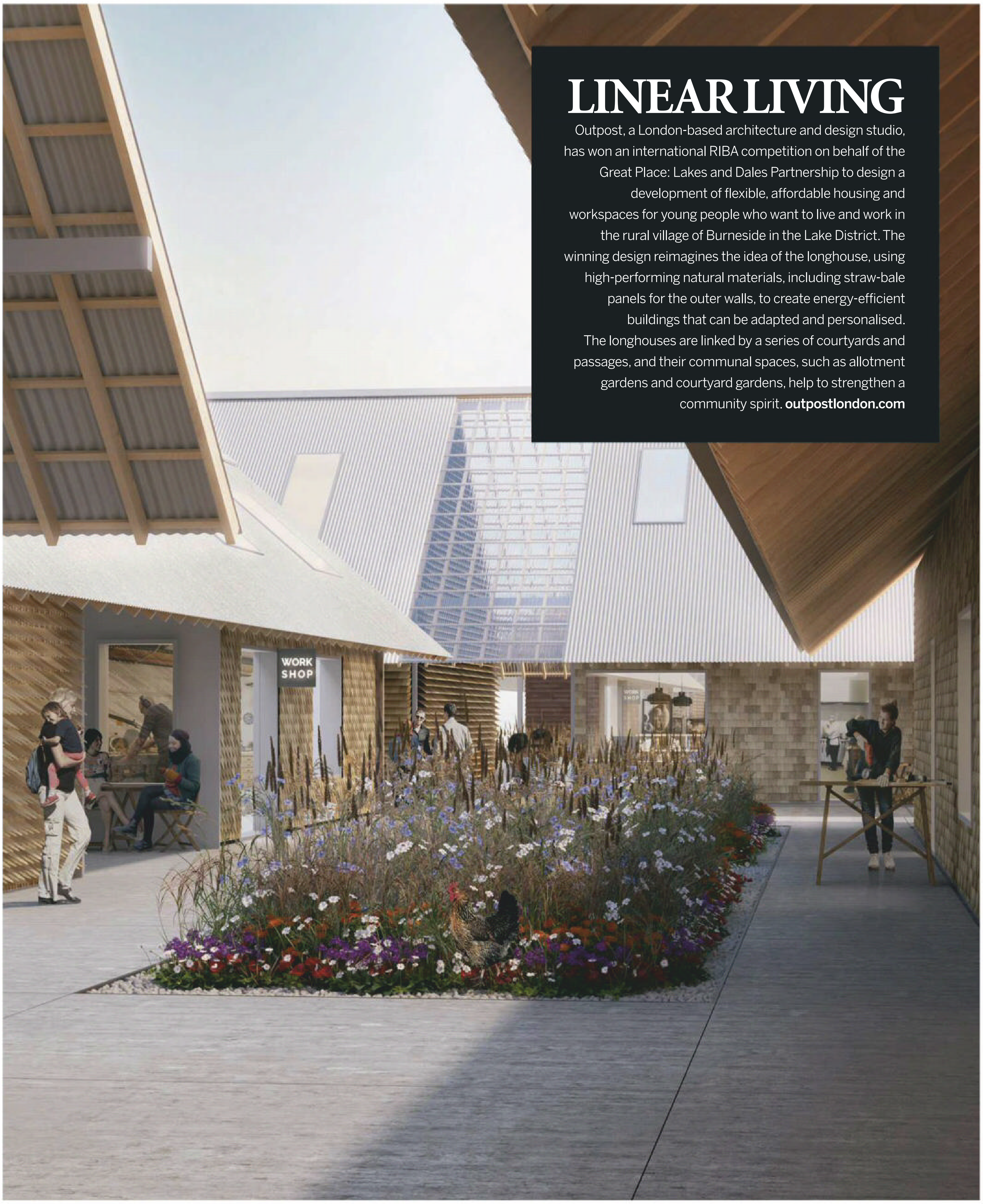

LINEAR LIVING

Outpost, a London-based architecture and design studio, has won an international RIBA competition on behalf of the Great Place: Lakes and Dales Partnership to design a development of flexible, affordable housing and workspaces for young people who want to live and work in the rural village of Burneside in the Lake District. The winning design reimagines the idea of the longhouse, using high-performing natural materials, including straw-bale panels for the outer walls, to create energy-efficient buildings that can be adapted and personalised. The longhouses are linked by a series of courtyards and passages, and their communal spaces, such as allotment gardens and courtyard gardens, help to strengthen a community spirit. **outpostlondon.com**

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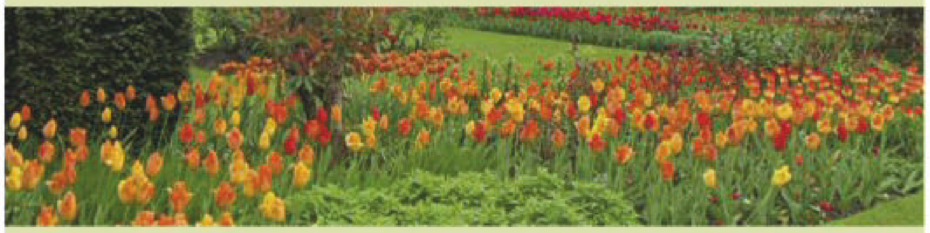

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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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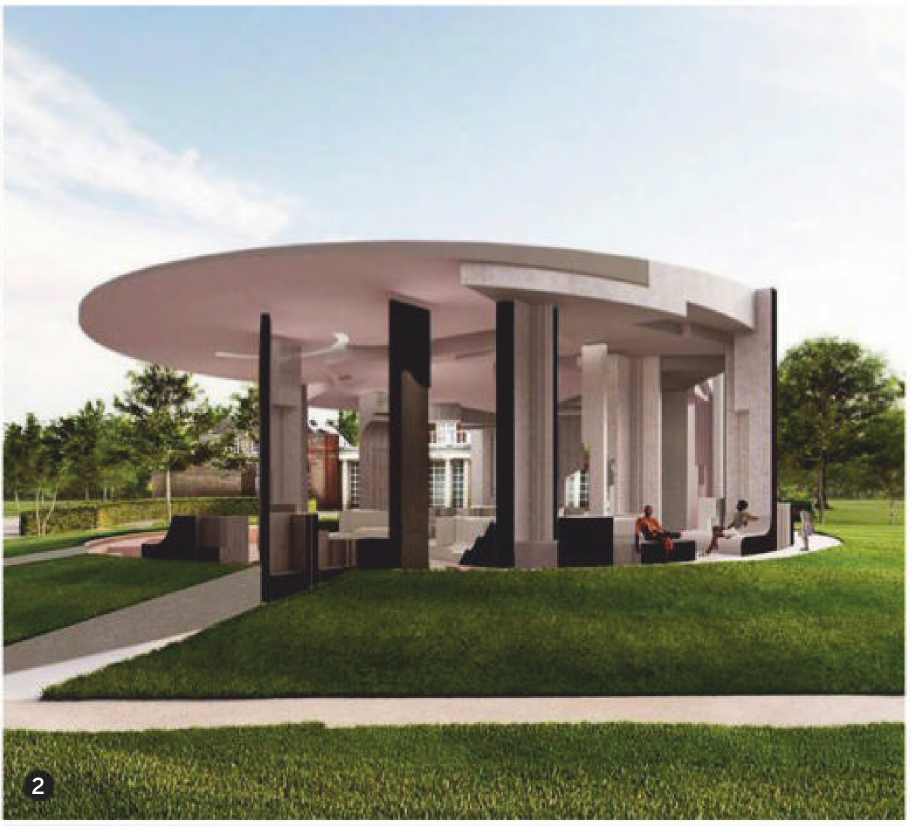

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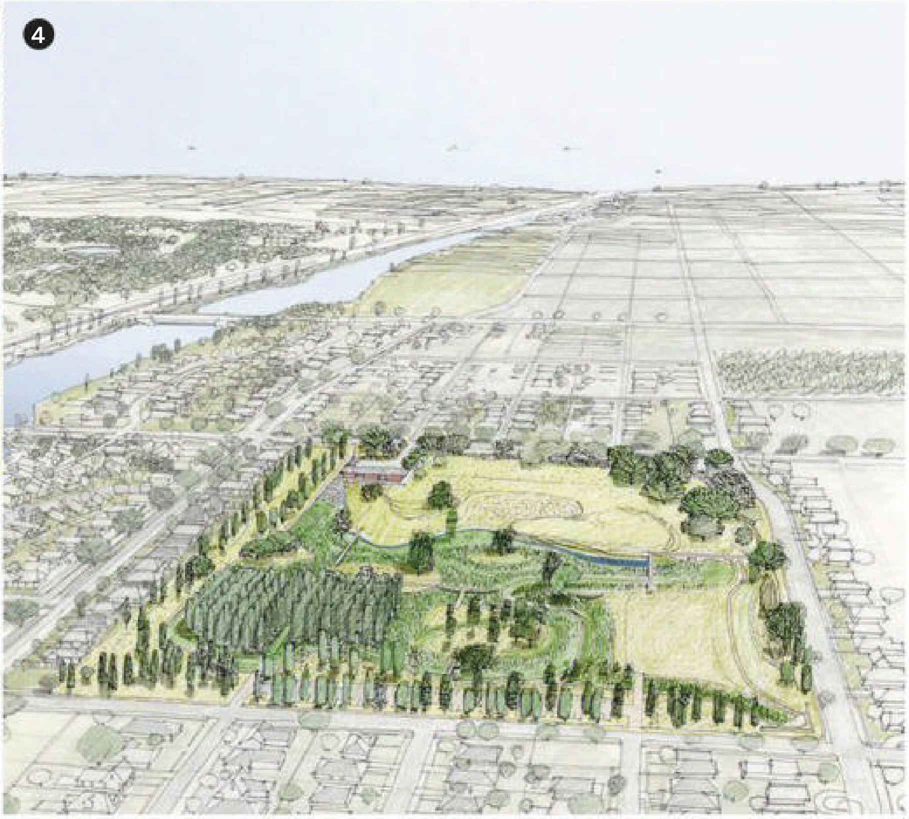


① FORMER FACTORY CLOCKS ON

Planning permission has been granted for a 4.95-hectare mixed-use development that delivers up to 1,300 homes on the site of a former Horlicks factory in Slough. Architects Sheppard Robson will restore part of the building, including the historic clocktower, that will house facilities such as a café, gym and community nursery. A mews street references historic railway lines, and forms part of new cycle links to surrounding neighbourhoods. The landscaping, by Bradley Murphy Design, includes community gardens criss-crossed with rills and streets lined with trees and hedges. **sheppardrobson.com**

② SERPENTINE PAVILION 2020

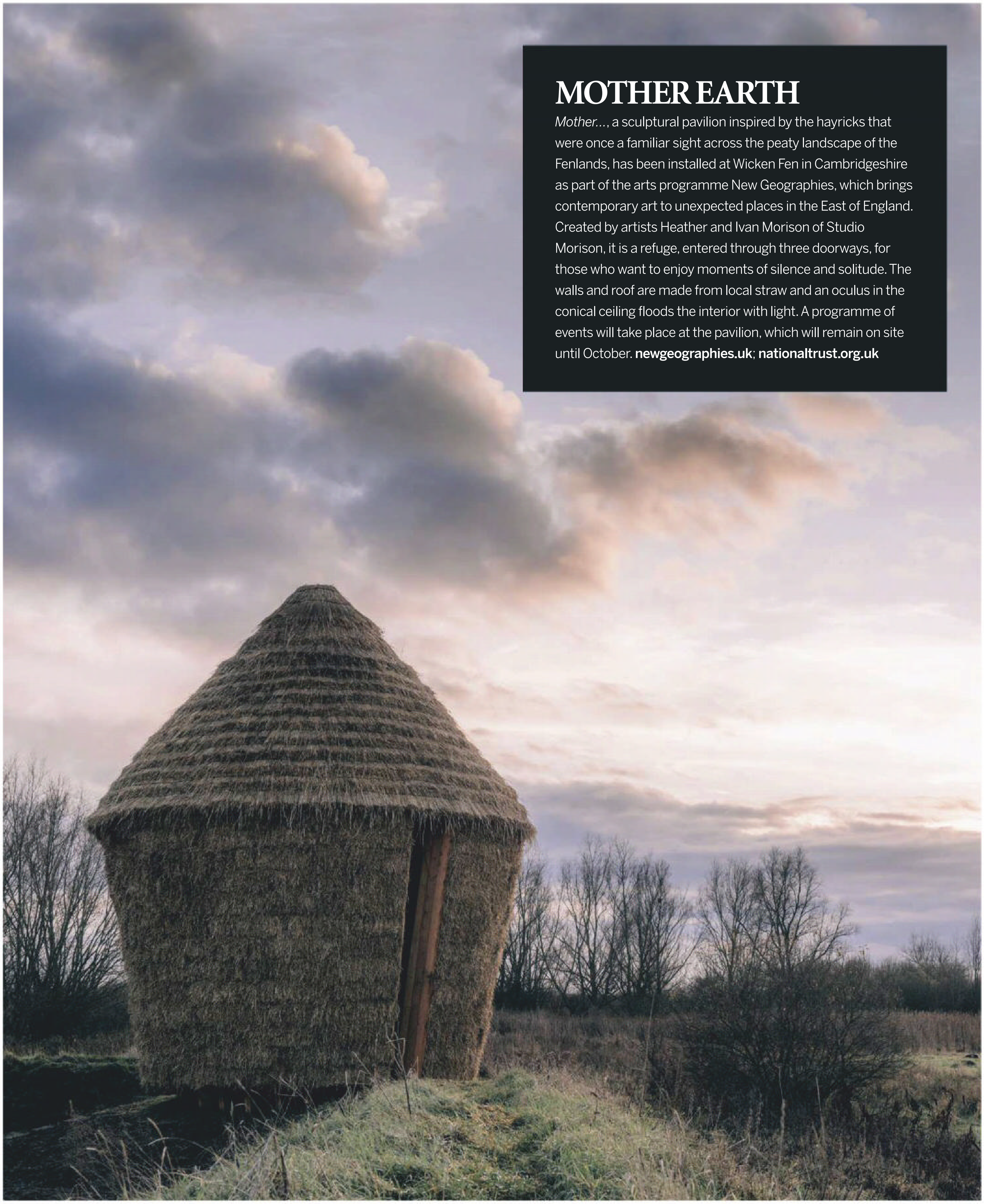
The 20th summer pavilion for London's Serpentine Gallery has been designed by Johannesburg-based studio Counterspace and will be constructed from cork and bricks made of recycled construction waste. K-Briq modules do not require firing and so produce a tenth of the carbon emissions of standard fired bricks. The building shapes are created by the addition, subtraction and splicing of architectural forms. Small, movable elements will allow parts of the pavilion to be put on display in neighbourhoods around London before being returned at the end of summer. **serpentinegalleries.org**

③ TRADING SPACES

A pocket garden on a trading estate in Hereford has been designed by career-change garden designer Sara Edwards. The Foley Community Garden is a shared green space formed by a curved planter made from galvanised steel left in its raw state, to blend with the industrial environment. A cantilevered iroko bench provides a social seating area for users of the Foley Trading Estate and the planting will be rich in wildlife- and pollinator-friendly plants. Construction starts this month and the garden, which was part-funded by crowd funding, will be planted up and maintained by volunteers. **no30design.co.uk**

④ NEW ORLEANS WETLANDS

A community of nuns has donated its convent and surrounding land, which was damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, to the city of New Orleans to become part of its flood prevention measures. The 25-acre Mirabeau Water Garden is being developed by New Orleans architects Waggoner & Ball and Carbo Landscape Architecture. It will have the capacity to absorb and store approximately 6.5 million gallons of floodwater with its cover of native meadow grasses combined with bioswales, and a grove of cypresses. Elevated boardwalks will create paths through the flood meadows. **carbo-la.com**



MOTHER EARTH

Mother…, a sculptural pavilion inspired by the hayricks that were once a familiar sight across the peaty landscape of the Fenlands, has been installed at Wicken Fen in Cambridgeshire as part of the arts programme New Geographies, which brings contemporary art to unexpected places in the East of England. Created by artists Heather and Ivan Morison of Studio Morison, it is a refuge, entered through three doorways, for those who want to enjoy moments of silence and solitude. The walls and roof are made from local straw and an oculus in the conical ceiling floods the interior with light. A programme of events will take place at the pavilion, which will remain on site until October. **newgeographies.uk**; **nationaltrust.org.uk**

STUDIO MORISON, MOTHER…, 2020. PHOTO: CHARLES EMERSON. COURTESY OF WYSING ARTS CENTRE AND NATIONAL TRUST FOR NEW GEOGRAPHIES

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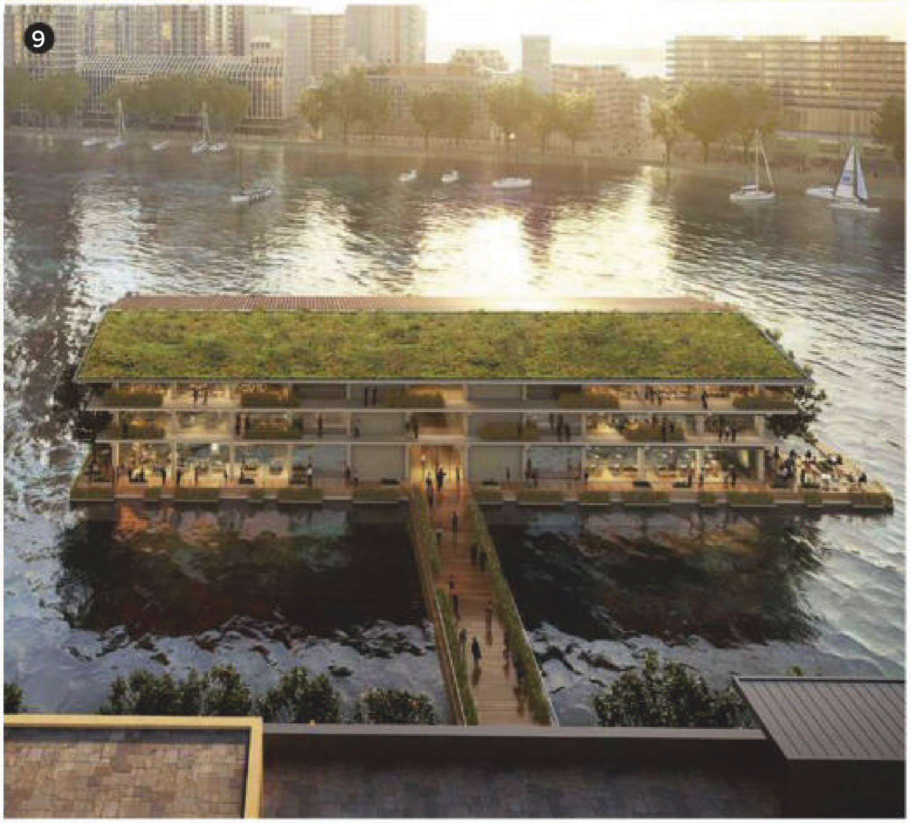


⑤ PLANT POWER

Interactive lighting based on the electricity generated by living plants has been installed in Park van Morgen in the municipality of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Small lights that respond to human presence twinkle as people walk along a 35m path. The project, dubbed the Park of Tomorrow, is a collaboration between Dutch designer Ermi van Oers and innovators Plant-e. The lights, which harvest the electrons produced during photosynthesis when the sugars excreted by plants are broken down by bacteria, can be applied wherever plants are growing in moist soil. **plant-e.com**; **livinglight.info/living-light-park**

⑥ GATES OPEN ON TO STRAWBERRY FIELD

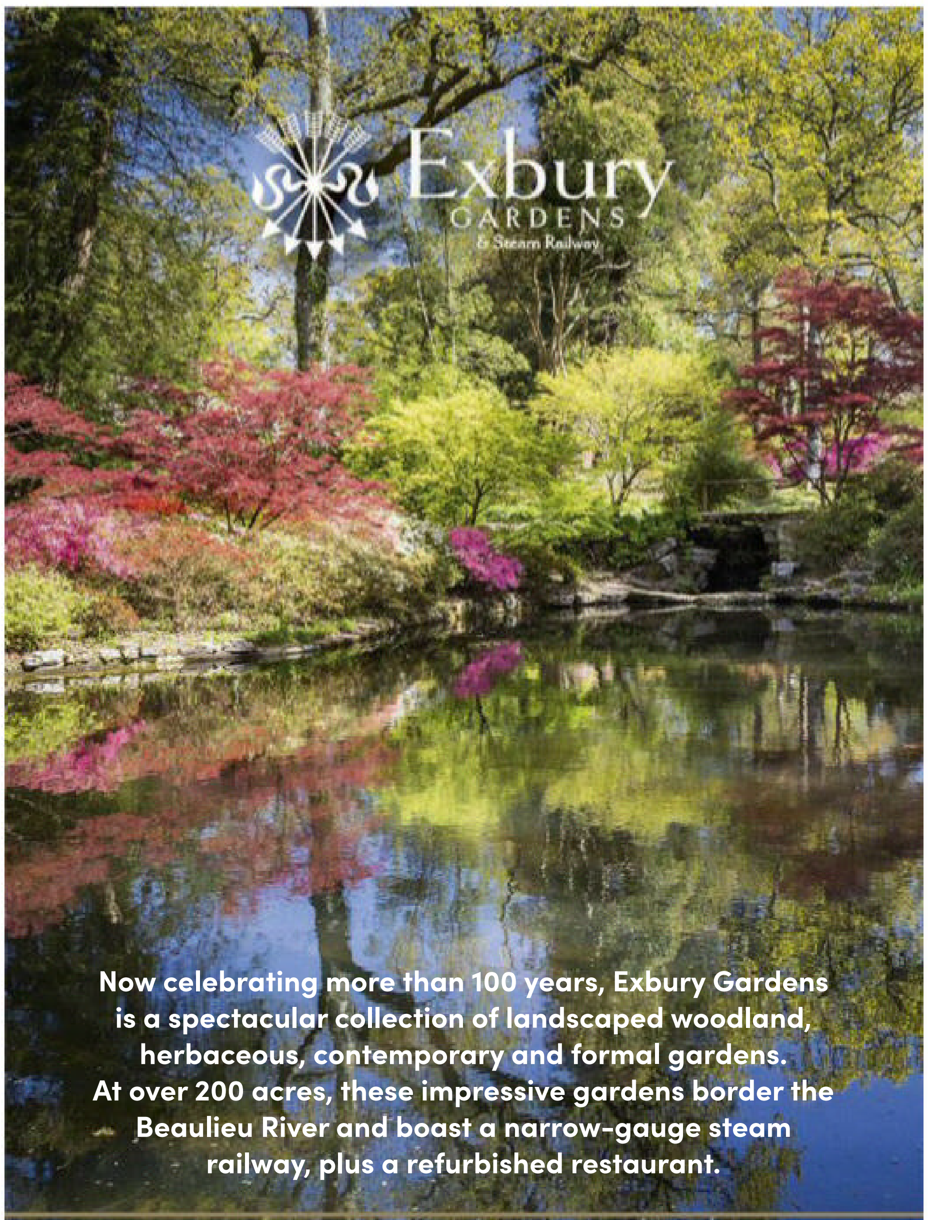
Liverpool's Strawberry Field, formerly the site of a Salvation Army children's home in whose grounds John Lennon played as a child, has opened to the public. The site includes a visitor centre exploring the history of the site and the writing of The Beatles song *Strawberry Fields Forever*, and a community café and shop, as well as gardens that have been restored by Gavin Jones, part of the Nurture Landscapes Group, and landscape architects Rankinfraser. The iconic red gates have been returned to the site, and the grounds planted with 85 trees and more than 14,000 shrubs. **strawberryfieldliverpool.com**

⑦ VICTORIA REVIVAL

A new vision for reduced traffic and increased green infrastructure in central London has been unveiled by business-led bodies Victoria BID and Victoria Westminster BID. Drawn up by architects Building Design Partnership and transport planning consultants Urban Flow, the People Wanted scheme includes removing traffic on two sides of Parliament Square, pedestrianising the route to the Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey. A new linear park along Victoria Street, would connect Victoria Station with the square. Westminster Cathedral piazza (above) would be improved with water features and extensive planting. **victoriabid.co.uk**

⑧ MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Construction has begun on Floating Office Rotterdam by Dutch architects Powerhouse Company. The wooden building, which can be disassembled and reused, contrives to be a blueprint for climate-resilient office design in the face of extreme weather events and rising sea levels, and will initially serve as the headquarters of the Global Center on Adaptation. Water from the Rijnhaven Canal will cool the building, and the roof, which is covered with solar panels and vegetation, provides a source of energy and insulation. Overhanging floors create shade from the sun. **powerhouse-company.com**



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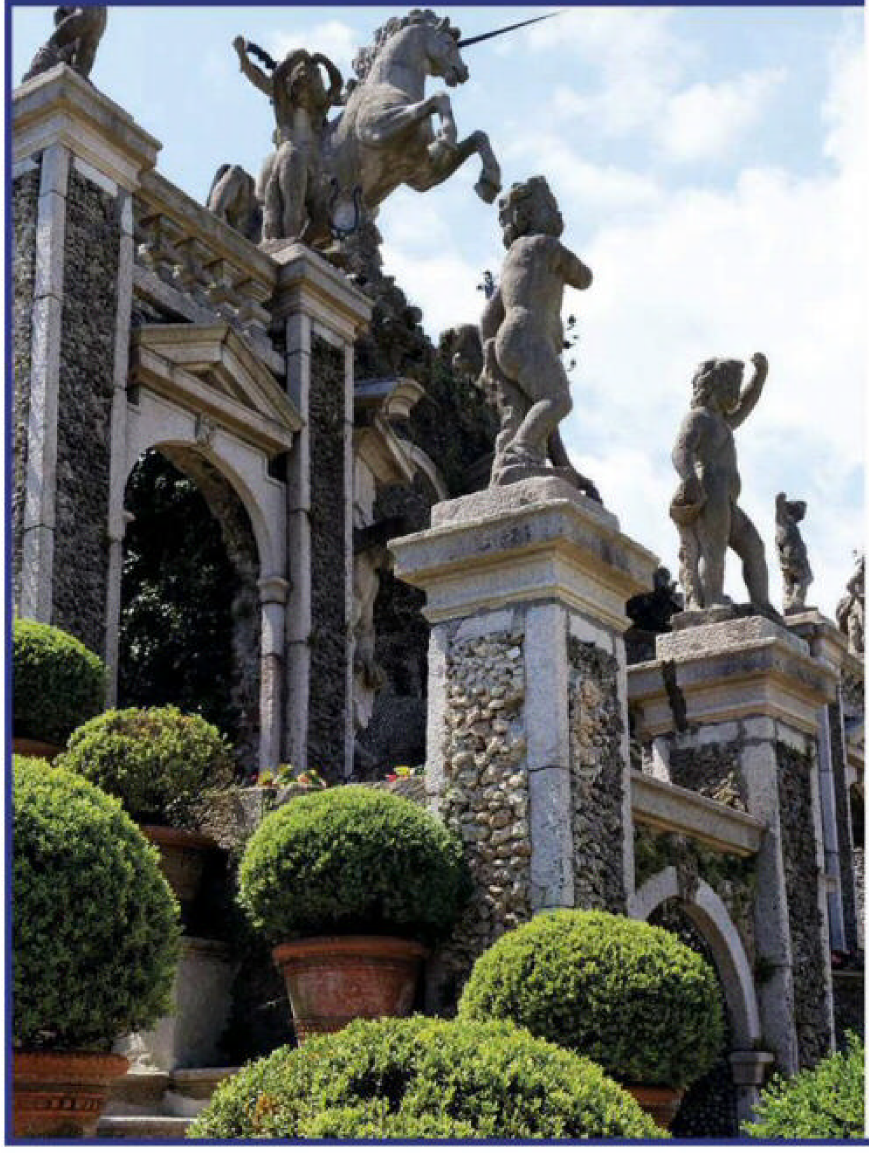

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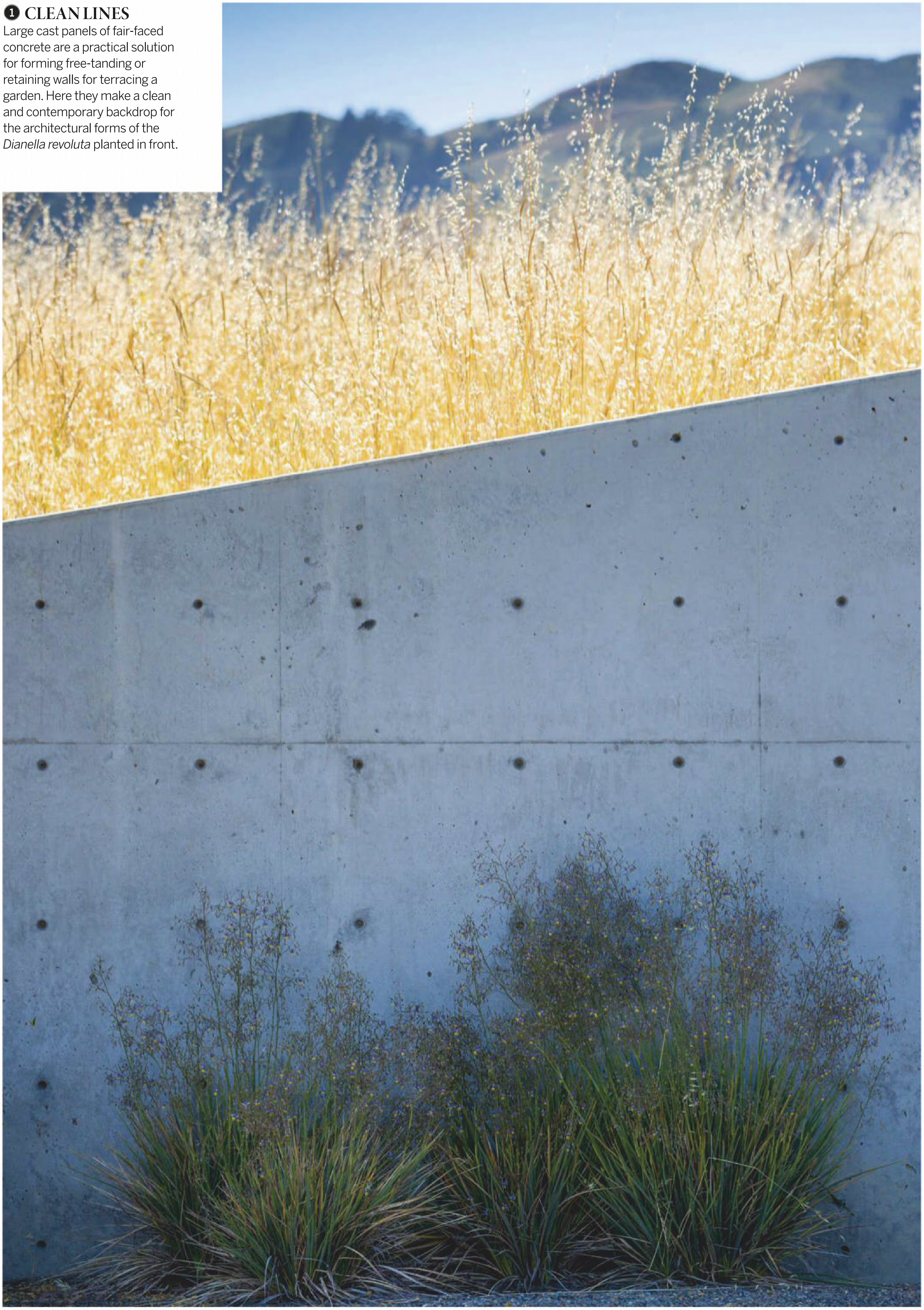
❶ CLEAN LINES

Large cast panels of fair-faced concrete are a practical solution for forming free-tanding or retaining walls for terracing a garden. Here they make a clean and contemporary backdrop for the architectural forms of the *Dianella revoluta* planted in front.



RICHARD BLOOM. DESIGN RON LUTSKO

Concrete

Using concrete has something of a bad reputation, but for designer Andy Sturgeon it is a versatile material that in the right hands can be both beautiful and useful

WORDS ANDY STURGEON

Concrete has had bad press in recent years due in part to its overuse by mediocre post-war architects and also because of that strange pattern imprinted concrete, which people inexplicably put on their driveways a decade or so ago. But concrete is far from being a modern material – it was used as far back as the 2nd century for the Pantheon in Rome – and is now enjoying something of a revival thanks to its incredible versatility and, if executed well, incredible beauty.

Polished concrete is hugely popular internally but has drawbacks outside as it can become too slippery when wet but it is possible to use it if you have an experienced contractor who applies the correct finish. Its main attributes are the ability to cover large areas without the joins of tiles or slabs and it has a rich, warm patina rather than an even flat colour. A good alternative is microcement, which is something of a new wonder product as an external finish. It can look just like a polished concrete but is applied in only a 2-4mm thick layer, uses only a small amount of water and raw material and is also quick drying. The drawbacks are that it has to be applied to a solid sub base, such as an existing concrete patio, for example, and any cracks or movement will be transferred into the microcement and exposed, although it can be repaired, which is a plus. I think its best uses are probably on walls or even, as it is waterproof for lining ornamental pools. If the pool is deep enough then the grey colour of the cement actually gives the water a pleasing greeny blue colour.

> Pre-cast slabs now celebrate the beauty of concrete and range from almost white to almost black through browns and terracotta with special step units and copings

Casting concrete *in situ* is useful if you have limited access and can't bring in huge pieces of stone or pre-cast concrete. A beautiful, smooth, fair-faced wall requires a great deal of skill but this can also be a low tech, inexpensive operation: reminiscent of the recently renovated Brutalist buildings on London's South Bank, a simple concrete retaining wall can be brought to life by the wood grain of the timber shuttering used to build it.

Peter Zumthor's award-winning concrete house in south Devon takes this to another level and is constructed in layers of 'rammed' concrete, built one layer a day so that the end result shows the joins that give the walls all the beauty of rammed earth but are long lasting and will weather well without needing much in the way of maintenance. As a backdrop to a contemporary planting scheme it is sublime and remarkably easy to achieve.

On the horizonatal plane, huge dramatic 'slabs' and steps can be cast in sizes and shapes that would never be possible in stone. Planting between these slabs is a good idea to eliminate the need for unsightly expansion joints and cement dyes can be used to manipulate colours. At Dan Hinkley's garden in the Pacific North West, I've also seen iron filings put into the surface to give a warm rusty glow.

Casting *in situ* is also useful for making outdoor kitchens and worktops allowing bespoke sizes and shapes and can be sealed to make a hygienic wipeable surface.

Pre-cast slabs for paving used to be mainly poor attempts at faux stone. Now, however, there are some excellent products that don't pretend to be something they are not but celebrate the beauty of concrete and range from almost white to almost black through browns and terracotta with special step units and copings, which are like a kit of parts and easy to work with.

Allegedly, concrete is the most widely used material on earth and there has been much debate about its environmental credentials. It takes a lot of energy to make the cement it contains so the end result is that concrete has quite a chunk of embedded carbon but this can be justified in part because it lasts for such a long period of time. Another argument in concrete's favour is that its raw materials – the sand and cement – are often relatively local compared to importing stone from many miles away or even from overseas so this keeps the carbon footprint comparatively low. There are also low-carbon cements in existence but they haven't found their way into the market yet.

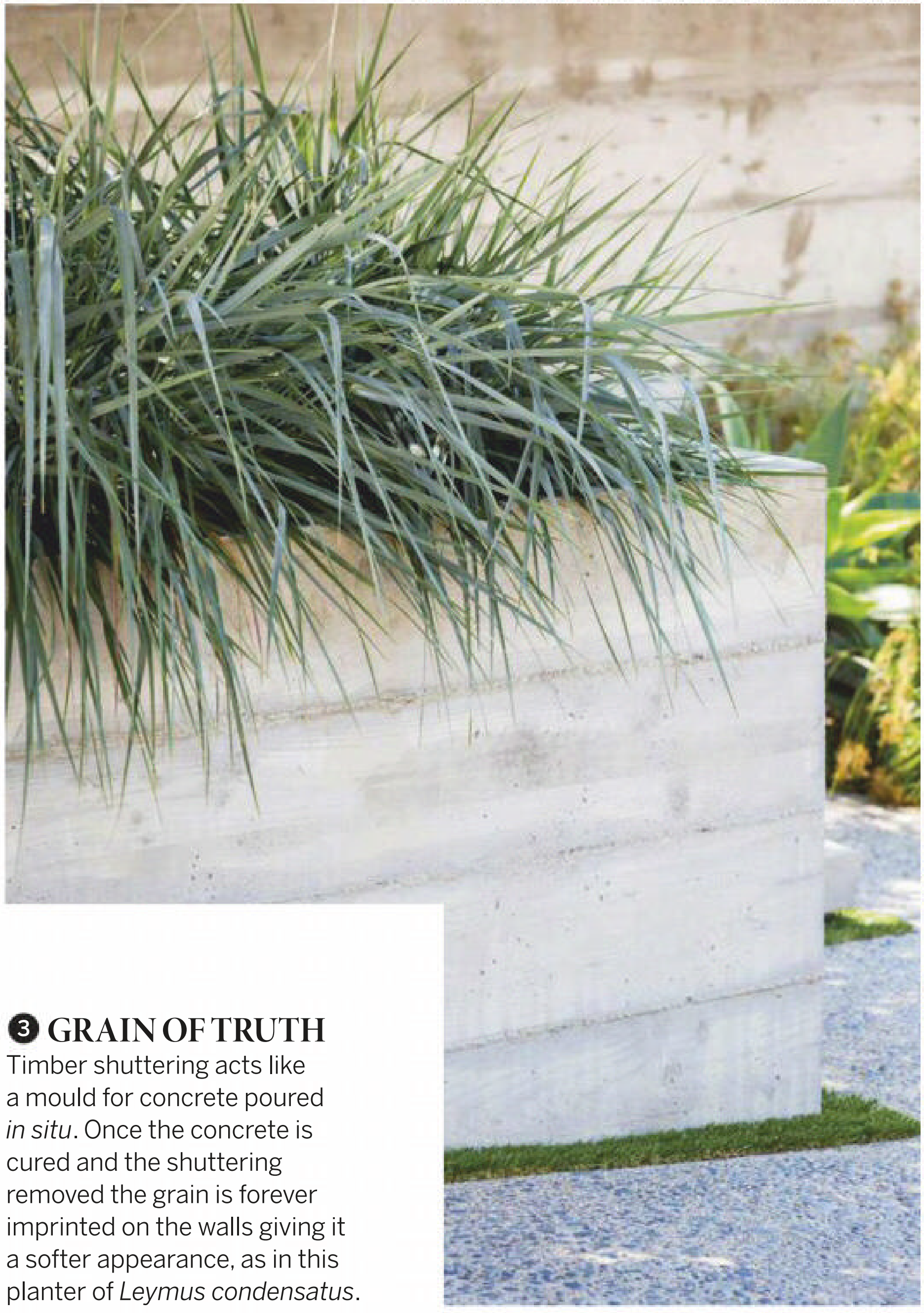
Existing concrete can also be recycled and reused within a garden. This not only saves on cost but also helps to reduce landfill. If old walls, paving or even buildings are being demolished they can be broken up and used in gabion wire baskets stacked together to form walls. The concrete itself can be used as the facing material or hidden behind a thin façade of a more attractive stone. I have also used crushed concrete as a mulch but you have to be careful to choose the right plants as it will leach lime into the soil and play havoc with the pH. □

Andy Sturgeon is an internationally renowned landscape and garden designer. He is the winner of eight Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, including Best in Show in 2019. **andysturgeon.com**

Turn the page for more ideas on using concrete ▷

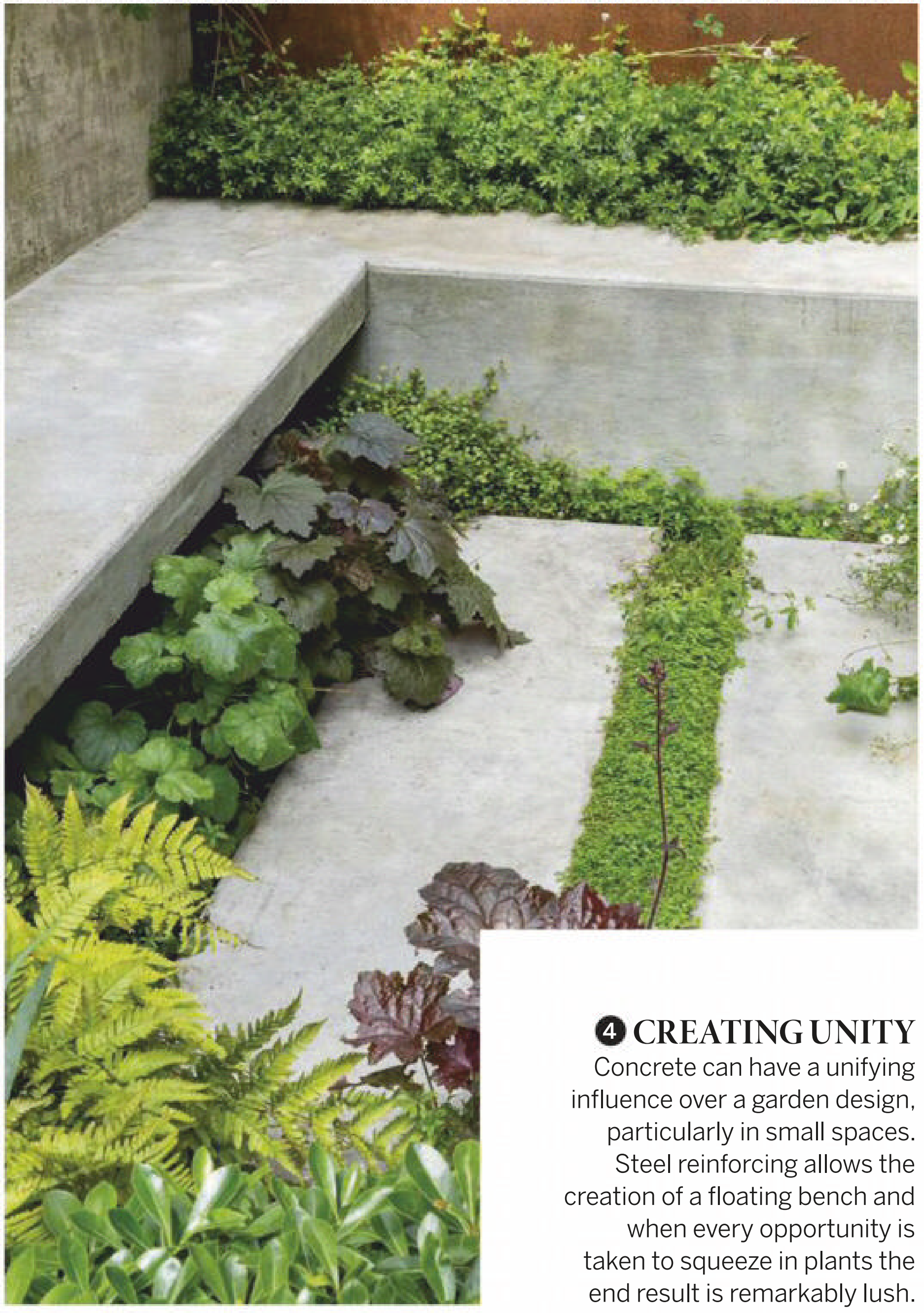
❷ LANDSCAPE LINK

Australian designer Bernard Trainor's work in California often uses concrete and, here at Big Sur, he has used retaining walls that wind through the garden creating a visual connection with the organic forms of the natural landscape beyond.



❸ GRAIN OF TRUTH

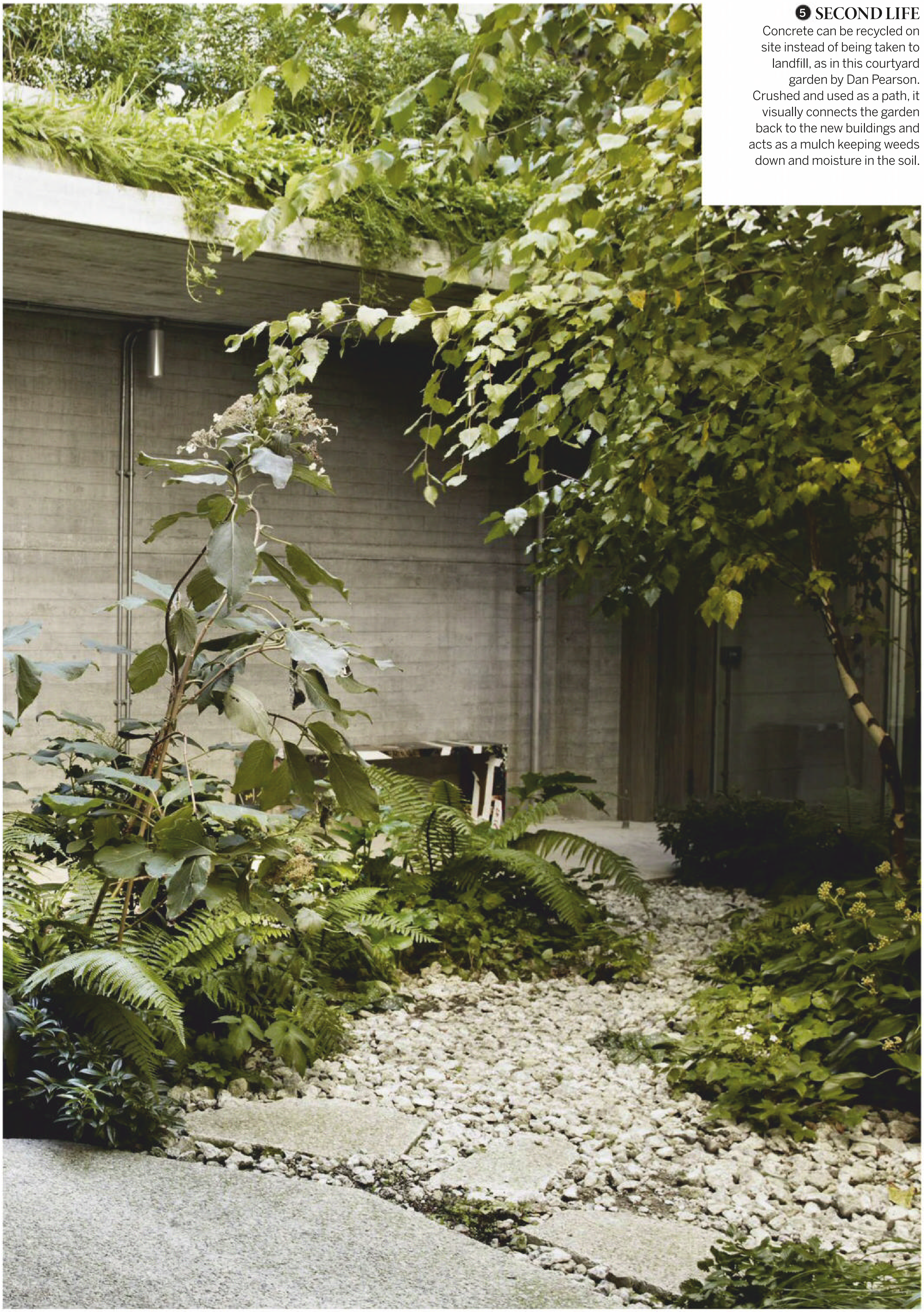
Timber shuttering acts like a mould for concrete poured *in situ*. Once the concrete is cured and the shuttering removed the grain is forever imprinted on the walls giving it a softer appearance, as in this planter of *Leymus condensatus*.



❹ CREATING UNITY

Concrete can have a unifying influence over a garden design, particularly in small spaces. Steel reinforcing allows the creation of a floating bench and when every opportunity is taken to squeeze in plants the end result is remarkably lush.

2 CLAIRE TAKACS, DESIGN BERNARD TRAINOR; 3 RICHARD BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS, DESIGN RYAN PRANGE; 4 MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN CLINTON WOOTTEN AND EMMA VOIT; 5 ANDREW MONTGOMERY, DESIGN DAN PEARSON STUDIO



⑤ SECOND LIFE
Concrete can be recycled on site instead of being taken to landfill, as in this courtyard garden by Dan Pearson. Crushed and used as a path, it visually connects the garden back to the new buildings and acts as a mulch keeping weeds down and moisture in the soil.

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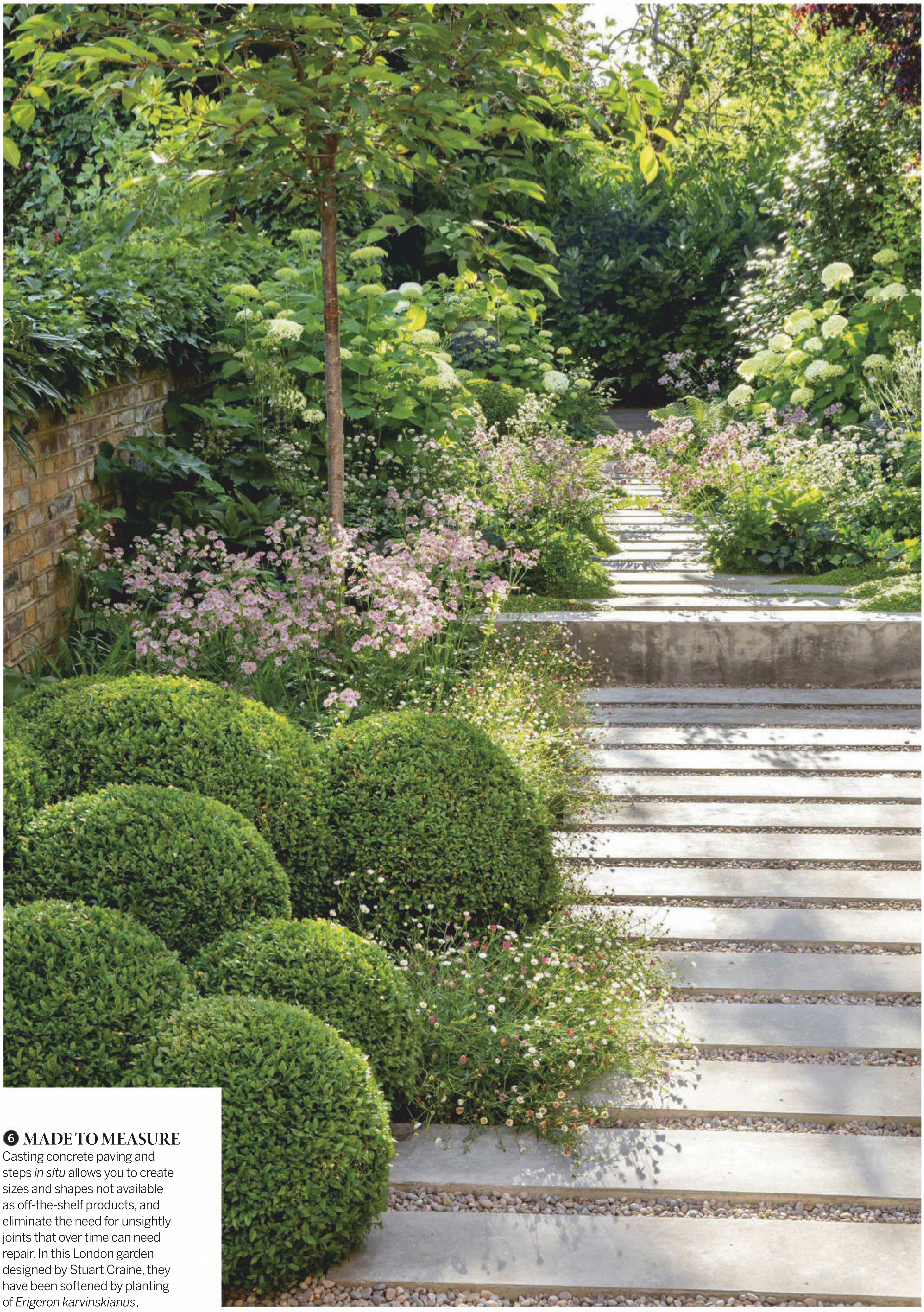

MARIANNE MAJERUS. DESIGN STUART CRAINE

❻ MADE TO MEASURE

Casting concrete paving and steps *in situ* allows you to create sizes and shapes not available as off-the-shelf products, and eliminate the need for unsightly joints that over time can need repair. In this London garden designed by Stuart Craine, they have been softened by planting of *Erigeron karvinskianus*.

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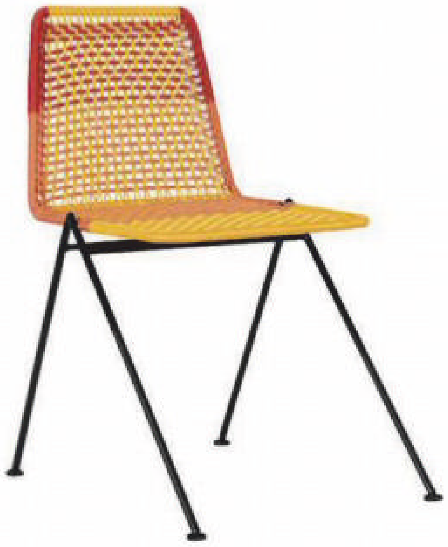

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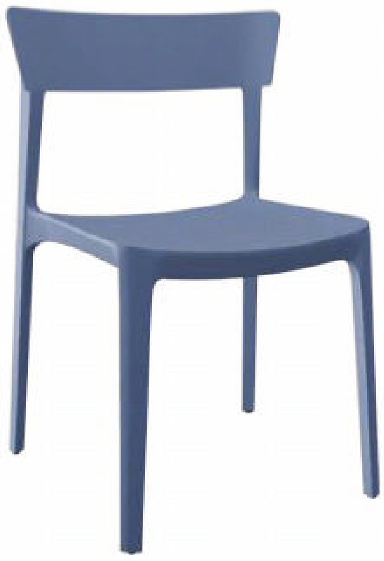

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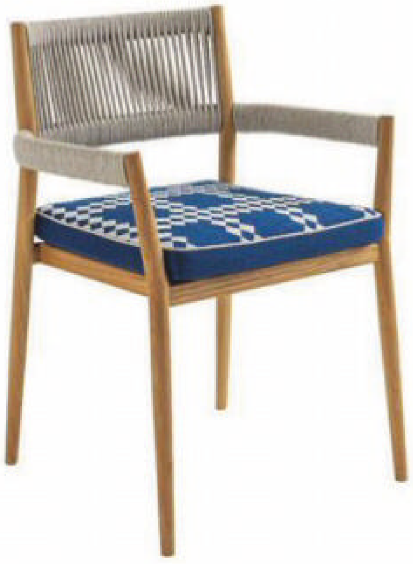

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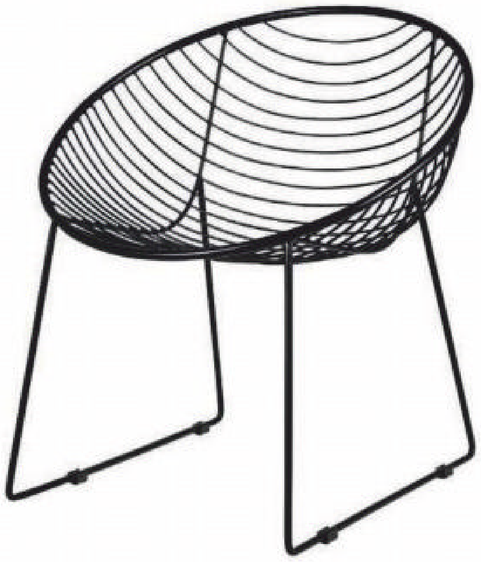
Cassina Dine Out Dining Chair, £1,152, Chaplins Furniture, 020 8421 1779, chaplins.co.uk



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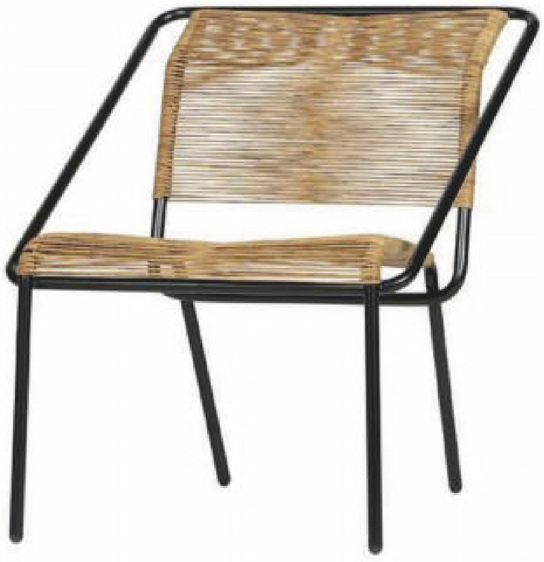
Drohan Black Metal Garden Occasional Chair, £125, Habitat, 0344 499 4686, habitat.co.uk



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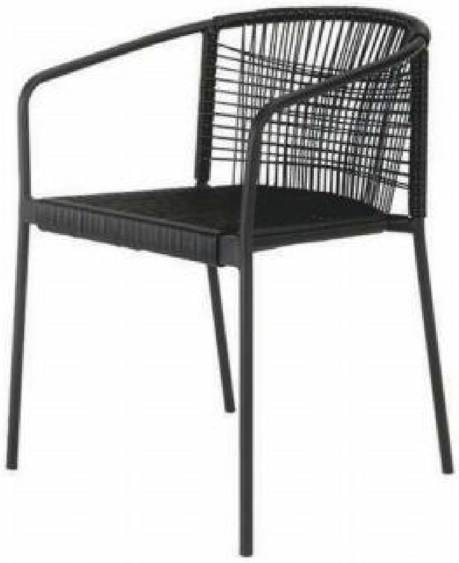
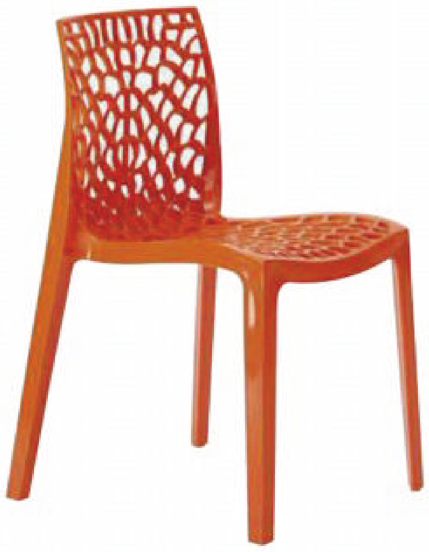
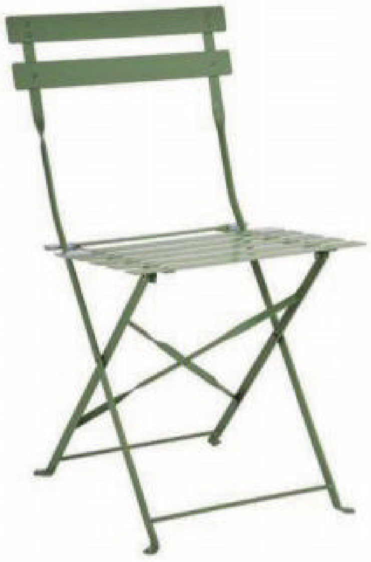
BePureHome Wisp Outdoor Armchair, in natural, £89, Naken, 01986 781663, naken.co.uk



VERSATILE
Jambi Black Synthetic Rattan Garden Dining Chair, £95, Habitat, 0344 499 4686, habitat.co.uk



STRIKING
Gruyver Grand Soleil Stackable Chair in orange, £54.95, Produce Shop, produceshopdesign.com



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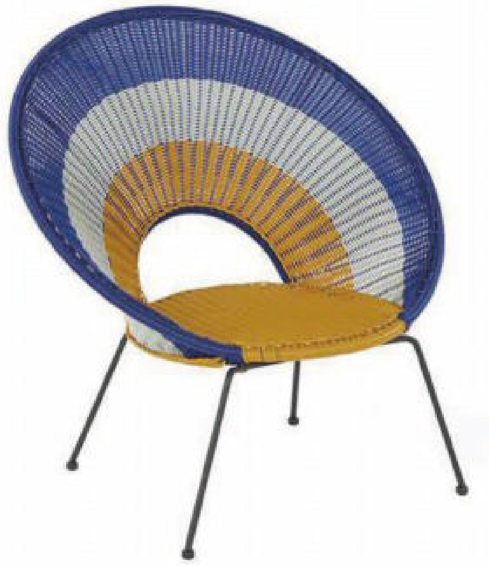

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DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, competition, reader offer, crossword, back issues

This subtle mix of different succulents is one of 28 container projects in Isabelle Palmer's new book *Modern Container Gardening*, reviewed on page 117

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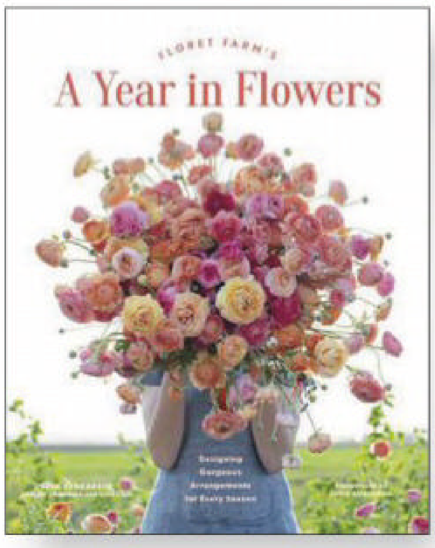
BOOK REVIEWS



FLORET FARM'S A YEAR IN FLOWERS

by Erin Benzakein

Chronicle Books, £21.99
ISBN 978-1452172897

A book that persuades you that anyone who loves flowers can succeed in making beautiful, seasonal, sustainable arrangements – and enjoy it.

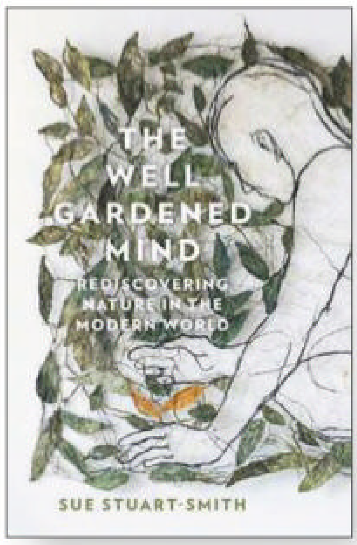
Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a garden writer.

How I wish I'd had this book last summer, when I was faced with 130 arrangements to make for my daughter's wedding. The bride was adamant that she didn't want stiff, blingy commercial flowers produced in developing countries at hideous environmental cost, but graceful, informal arrangements of fresh garden flowers, fitting for an English country wedding. But how to achieve it? (Flower arranging must surely have been one of the arts you learned at finishing school, along with how to address a dinner invitation to the Archbishop of Canterbury.) If only we'd known about flower farmer Erin Benzakein…

Reading *A Year in Flowers* is like being taken by the hand by a very patient, very thorough, very smiley teacher. First she sets out the basics – the equipment you'll need: tools, tapes, flower supports and vases. Then she comes on to flowers. She too loathes the characterless blooms bred to travel half way round the world without water. 'Flowers are just like food', she writes, 'the best results always come from using local, seasonal ingredients picked at their prime.' Imperfection and irregularity only add to their beauty.

She explains how to condition flowers, helpfully dividing material into 'wimpy', 'woody', 'sappy' and 'dirty'. And now comes the hard bit – putting arrangements together. Except it isn't hard at all, she insists: every arrangement requires just six fundamental ingredients, and once you've grasped this, you can do more or less anything – bouquets, centrepieces, posies, even floral crowns – as she illustrates with a range of seasonal examples.

The book is written in American, so English readers may be temporarily baffled by plant names such as winebark, honeywort or apple of Peru. Happily, most of these plants reappear, with their botanical names and larger pictures, in the helpful A-Z at the end of the book. Beautifully photographed, practical and succinct – give this book to every bride (and her mother).



THE WELL GARDENED MIND: REDISCOVERING NATURE IN THE MODERN WORLD

by Sue Stuart-Smith

Harper Collins, £20
ISBN 978-0008100711

Psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and wife of garden designer Tom, Sue Stuart-Smith provides a new perspective on the power of gardens to heal the mind.

Reviewer Marian Boswall is a landscape architect and garden writer.

This is a book so wise and comfortable that it merits a place alongside Christopher Lloyd's *The Well-Tempered Garden* by the side of every bed.

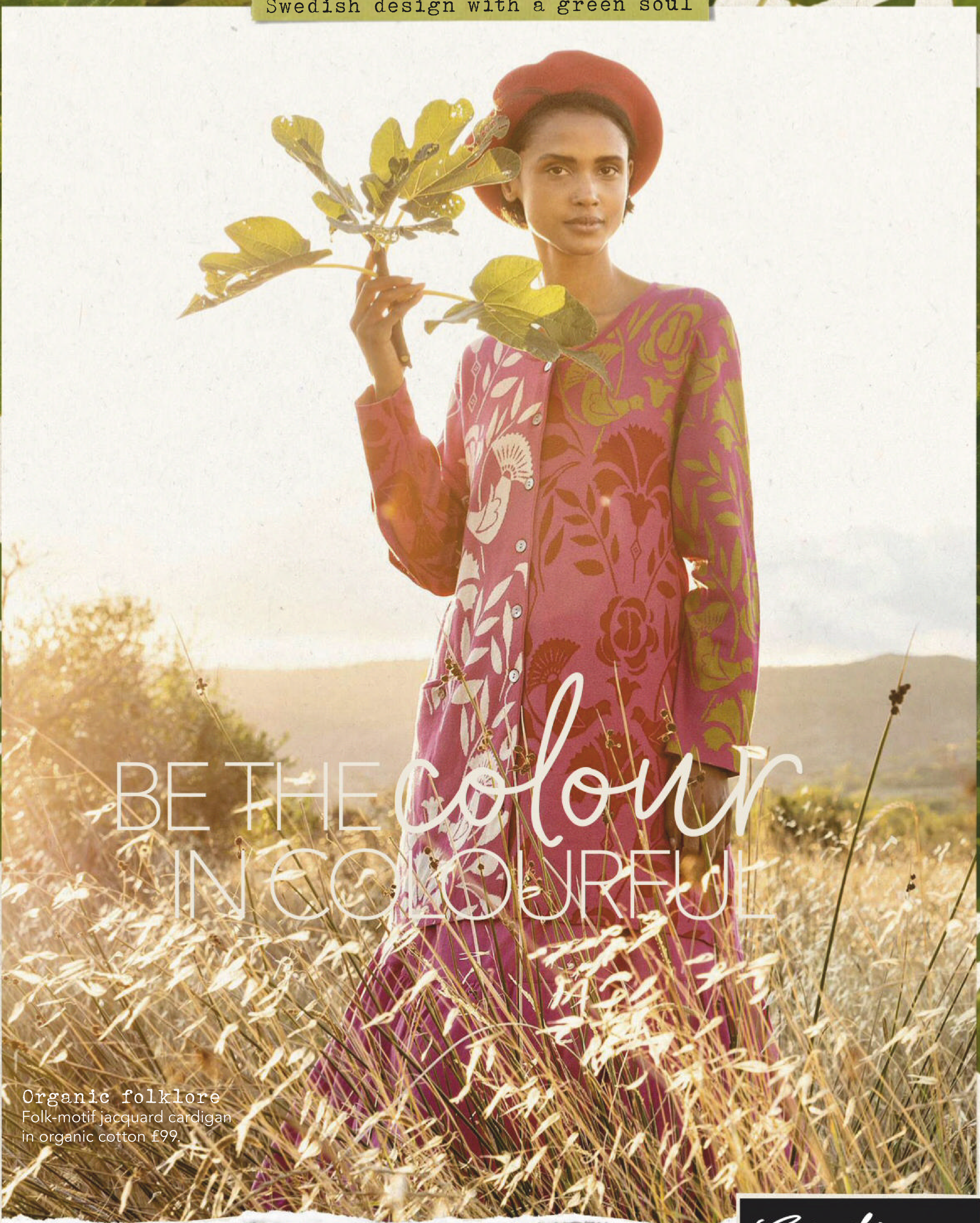
Dr Stuart-Smith read English at Cambridge before becoming an eminent psychiatrist and psychotherapist. Her writing has the simple grace of someone who really knows her subject and how best to explain it.

The book's main tenet is simple: that our gardens and nature are vital to our wellbeing. Having established the poor state of our current mental health and ecology, the book leads us gently through case studies, literary references and fascinating historic vignettes to clearly show what has been hiding in plain sight: that we are part of nature and that we need to cultivate our connection in order to thrive.

Stuart-Smith's work is as wide and as thorough as her scientific training and her in-depth research. She references places all over the world where horticulture is helping to heal, from secure prisons in the USA to restorative gardens in the UK. Through touching conversations and sometimes harrowing stories, she introduces people who have been helped back from dark mental spiritual or physical situations by contact with nature and greenery. She also lightly brings in her own personal journey of healing and discovery as well as that of her grandfather after the First World War.

Her deep understanding of the human psyche makes this a perfect source text as well as an engrossing read. Topics range from our understanding of mortality, and relative time, to the scientific reasons why beauty calms and revitalises us. As she writes: 'If you are not a gardener it may seem strange to think that scrabbling about in the soil can be a source of existential meaning.' But gardener or not she brings us closer to understanding how plants can help our individual and collective spirit.

Swedish design with a green soul



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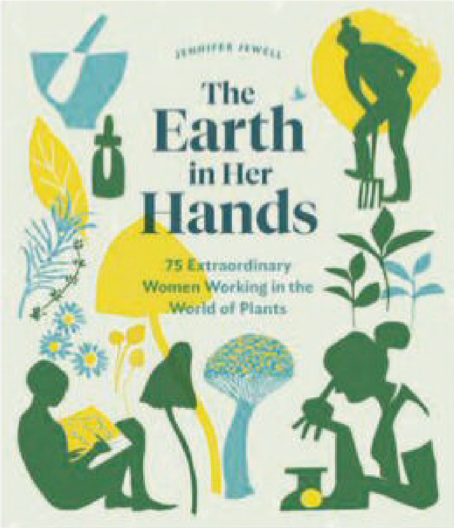


THE EARTH IN HER HANDS: 75 EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN WORKING IN THE WORLD OF PLANTS

by Jennifer Jewell

Timber Press, £26.99
ISBN 978-1604699029

An illuminating and inspiring book of personal and professional journeys with plants is a must-read for anyone interested in the human impulse to garden.

Reviewer Hannah Gardner is a horticulturist and garden writer.

As host of the award-winning podcast *Cultivating Place*, Jennifer Jewell is mindful of the human instinct to interact with plants. Her first book is an empowering and expertly curated collection of 75 portraits of women working in diverse sectors of horticulture, with a focus on those active in the past 25 years. Drawing together these women in one book allows the reader to appreciate their contributions in the wider context of protecting biodiversity and cultivating our interdependence with plants.

The women are of diverse ethnicity, sexual orientation and age, but the geographic scope of the book is represented by women from the USA, Canada, Australia, India, Japan, Ireland and the UK. The author clearly demonstrates that women's contribution to horticulture is central to an increased social and environmental responsibility. A thread that quickly becomes apparent is the importance not just of individual knowledge and achievements, but also of communication. These women are instinctive educators and mentors. Their output is considerable, many are authors, also communicating via social media, broadcasting, workshops or lecturing. This enables their energy, focus and insight to radiate out, shining a light on the challenges facing the natural world and our place in it. The scope of Jewell's selection is impressive: 'I want to explore the ways this field is a more viable and creative career path for women than ever before,' she writes.

In each profile a short, paragraph describes a favourite landscape followed by an exploration of each woman's 'plant journey'. The text is lively and engaging, enriched by the considerable knowledge and awareness of the author. Other inspirational women are listed for each entry. This greatly expands the range of the text, directing the reader towards other rewarding material and an appreciation of great lives lived.

MODERN CONTAINER GARDENING
How to Create a Stylish Small-space Garden Anywhere
Isabelle Palmer

MODERN CONTAINER GARDENING: HOW TO CREATE A STYLISH SMALL-SPACE GARDEN ANYWHERE

By Isabelle Palmer

Hardie Grant Books, £16
ISBN 978-1784883133

This colourful guide to planting container gardens from the Balcony Gardener, is full of ideas, ranging from the simple to the complex.

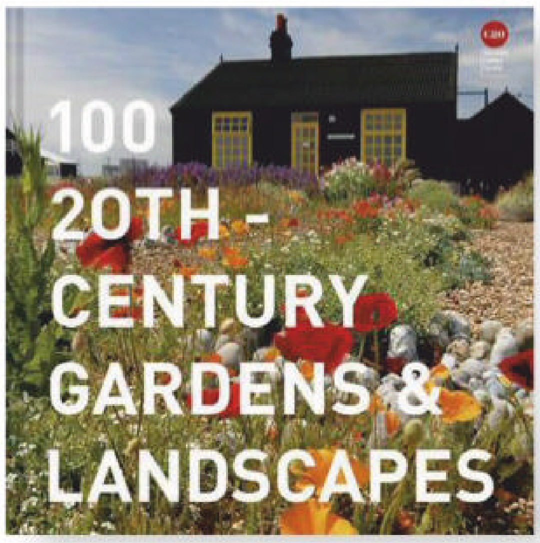
Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

If you live in a city or a town, you may have a tiny outdoor space – a balcony, a terrace or a courtyard. You may think it has limited potential in gardening terms. Not so, says the author of this book Isabelle Palmer, also known as The Balcony Gardener, a small-space garden designer who has been cultivating and beautifying diminutive corners of London for the past 11 years. Happily, you can have a garden in a small space – even a wild meadow garden if you choose – and Palmer shows us how to do it in this accessible guide to creating container gardens. It's aimed predominantly at novice gardeners (showing it's not as complicated as it looks) but seasoned pros may find it useful for inspiration, as it has original ideas for planters and how to grow plants in unlikely places.

The bulk of the 175-page book is given to Palmer's 28 container projects, some as simple as planting a 'Black Star' morning glory in a painted terracotta pot or combining Japanese laurel with spindle tree in a planter, but also the more extravagant – a frothy pink sweet pea trough with snapdragon, diascia, verbena and coneflower, for example, and a meadow planter billowing with common yarrow, German pink, viper's bugloss and lady's bedstraw. Each project comprises four pages and includes images, an introduction, lists of equipment and plants needed (including botanical names), instructions on how to 'get the look' as well as symbols showing difficulty level, growing season and conditions.

Some of her combinations might not be to everyone's taste – neon geraniums, perhaps – but you are sure to find something to please here. Palmer's novel ways of adapting dull containers using paints are particularly inspiring. Throw in a glossary of gardening terms, a stockist list, beautiful imagery, practical gardening advice and a condensed two-page 'calendar of care' and here is a book that should encourage more gardening in petite urban pockets.

BOOK REVIEWS



100 20TH-CENTURY GARDENS & LANDSCAPES
edited by Susannah Charlton and Elain Harwood

Batsford / 20th Century Society, £25
ISBN 978-1849945295

An authoritative survey of British landscape projects that span the 20th century – with a strong bias towards modernist landscapes.

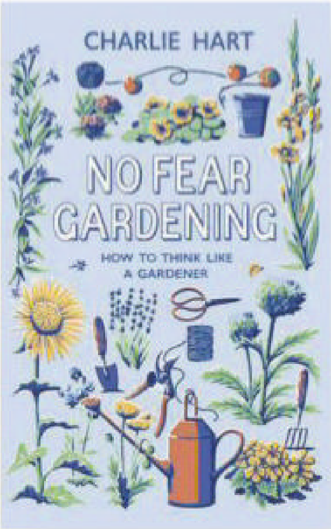
Reviewer Tim Richardson is a writer and garden critic.

The 20th Century Society, which has produced this neat little book, was founded to protect and conserve examples of Art Deco, though latterly architectural modernism has become the focus of most of its activity. This book reflects that bias, in that a good proportion of the landscapes (few are gardens) in it have been chosen from the post-war modernist landscape movement led by the likes of Geoffrey Jellicoe and Sylvia Crowe. This means that there is a relatively high proportion of power stations, reservoirs and cemeteries included in the survey, which may leave some garden enthusiasts bemused.

This is not a criticism per se, because modernist landscape design has been rather neglected in mainstream garden writing. It is good to find out more about Victor Pasmore's 'floating' Apollo Pavilion and landscape (1969) at Peterlee in County Durham, for example, and the book contains a fine essay by Elain Harwood on large-scale post-war landscape planning.

The flipside of the landscape-led approach is that planting design is almost completely ignored as an aspect of the art of garden-making. In those entries that could cover it, such as one on Piet Oudolf's work at Hauser & Wirth in Somerset, there is no attempt at serious contextual discussion. Perhaps it is revealing that the name of influential Dutch naturalistic designer Henk Gerritsen is misspelled in the text.

The book is attractive in its format and keenly priced. The text entries (by multiple authors) are extremely short and variable in quality. One or two are masterpieces of concision, such as that on Portmeirion, Clough Williams-Ellis's fantasy landscape in Wales. Equally intriguing but less well-known is Sphinx Hill (1998), a remarkable post-modern house and garden on the Thames in Oxfordshire, while it is good to know that Great Yarmouth's Venetian Waterways (1928) were comprehensively restored with Lottery funding in 2019.



NO FEAR GARDENING
by Charlie Hart

Constable, £16.99
ISBN 978-1472132413

An easy to follow book that aims to calm the nerves of novice gardeners by explaining an array of garden tasks and botanical names.

Reviewer Jack Wallington is a garden designer.

Following his gardening memoir *Skymeadow*, Charlie Hart's second book, *No Fear Gardening*, is an enjoyable read demystifying the tasks every gardener faces. And let's be honest, some of the things we get up to, such as shovelling horse poo around flowers or drawing blood while pruning a spiky shrub in the depths of freezing winter can, to beginners, appear off-putting.

Hart explains such oddities in a light and to-the-point manner: 'The correct place for a vegetable patch is the spot with enough light and enough shelter that is closest to the external door of the house, that is itself closest to the kitchen. That is all there is to it.'

Unlike practical how-to books, *No Fear Gardening* is more concerned with the 'why' discussed in an entertaining rather than text-book style. Well written in a carefree tone, it's an easy read with no gardening knowhow required.

Chapters cover gardening basics, such as plant types and weeds, through to design, vegetables, trees and hard landscaping projects. Each chapter is then broken into bite-size chunks that can be read in any order but ultimately link seamlessly into the next. Reading like a novel with plenty of personal anecdotes, I found it fun to read cover to cover.

Refreshingly unabashed at romanticising traditional planting, roses, topiary and mock orange are covered as well as large trees many of us with tiny gardens dream of. Rather than being off putting, Hart's enthusiasm flows from the page and these large-scale gardening points – ride-n mowers for instance – are interesting and apply to parks in towns and cities while fuelling urbanite dreams of a large country garden.

Up-to-date thinking on wildlife, wellbeing and no-dig cultivation pop up too, which are applicable to gardens big and small, making this a perfect introduction to gardening without the fear of doing something wrong.

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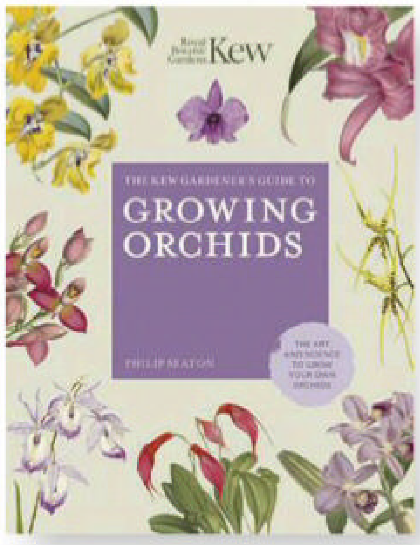


THE KEW GUIDE TO GROWING ORCHIDS : THE ART AND SCIENCE TO GROW YOUR OWN ORCHIDS

by Philip Seaton

Frances Lincoln , £12.99
ISBN 978-0711242807

A book that manages to combine the botanical beauty of orchids with advice on how to grow these exotic plants from seed, and harvest vanilla pods.

Reviewer Matthew Reese is head gardener at Malverleys.

The Kew Gardener's Guide to Growing Orchids is a small, well-produced book that introduces the gardener to the practice of cultivating orchids. The book begins with a potted history, delving into what has driven orchids to become so popular, before briefly outlining the various types of orchids, their distribution and ecology. The guide highlights how orchids have recently become more mainstream, and have actually proven much more robust as houseplants than was once thought. Indeed, the book caters for the amateur windowsill gardener very thoroughly, for which there is a definite and growing trend, but greenhouse cultivation and growing terrestrial orchids in the garden are also considered.

The information given is comprehensive, yet concise. The prose is accessible and delivered in short, manageable chapters that will not overwhelm the reader and novice orchid grower (at whom this book is aimed).

Advice is given on choosing plants, equipment, compost etc. The book discusses which rooms might be most suitable and even provides information on 'holiday care' for orchids.

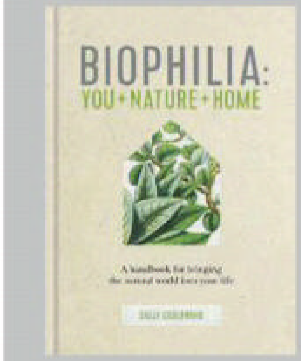
There is an encyclopedic section of more well-known and desirable orchid species, each with its own dedicated page. The species have a brief description with cultivation notes and lovely illustrations together with an interesting orchid anecdote. Woven through the plant section are 12 bite-sized practical projects, such as repotting a *Cymbidium* or training flower spikes.

The book concludes with informative sections on where to see orchids, conservation, troubleshooting (covering pests and diseases), and a very useful guide of what to do when, which will take the orchid grower through the seasons.

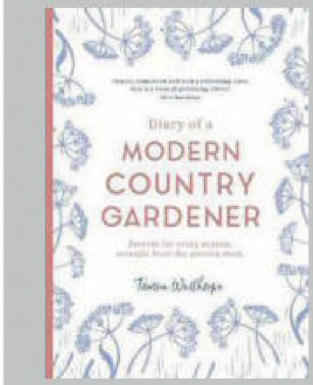
The purpose of this book is to guide the reader on how to successfully grow orchids and this aim is very adeptly achieved. This book will be a truly useful resource for the professional gardener as well as the enthusiastic novice.

Other books

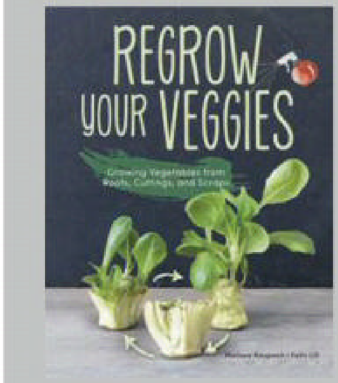
From recycling your vegetable waste to making your own natural dyes, this month's pick has plenty to keep you busy



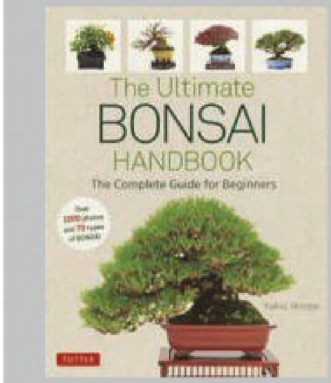
BIOPHILIA
by Sally Coulthard
Kyle Books, £14.99
ISBN 978-0857837158
How to embrace the natural world by transforming your interior spaces with specific materials, colours, views and sounds.



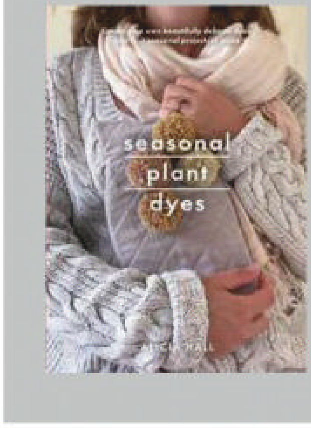
DIARY OF A MODERN COUNTRY GARDENER
by Tamsin Westhorpe
Orphans Publishing, £20
ISBN 978-1903360422
An entertaining account of a year in the Herefordshire country garden of garden journalist Tamsin Westhorpe, packed with seasonal tips.



REGROW YOUR VEGGIES
by Melissa Raupach and Felix Lill
Companion House, £14.99
ISBN 978-1620083680
Reduce waste and save money, by having a constant source of fresh veg close by. Includes instructions on how to care for your produce and tips on preventing rot and mould.



BONSAI HANDBOOK
by Yukio Hirose
Tuttle Publishing, £19.99
ISBN 978-4805315026
Banish Bonsai fear with this guide from one of Japan's leading experts. Includes over 1,000 photos, clear instructions and tips on containers, trimming, pruning and propagation.



SEASONAL PLANT DYES
by Alicia Hall
White Owl, £14.99
ISBN 978-1526747235
An illustrated guide to creating colourful and environmentally friendly plant dyes, with techniques on how to extract the dyes and tips on the best fabrics to use.

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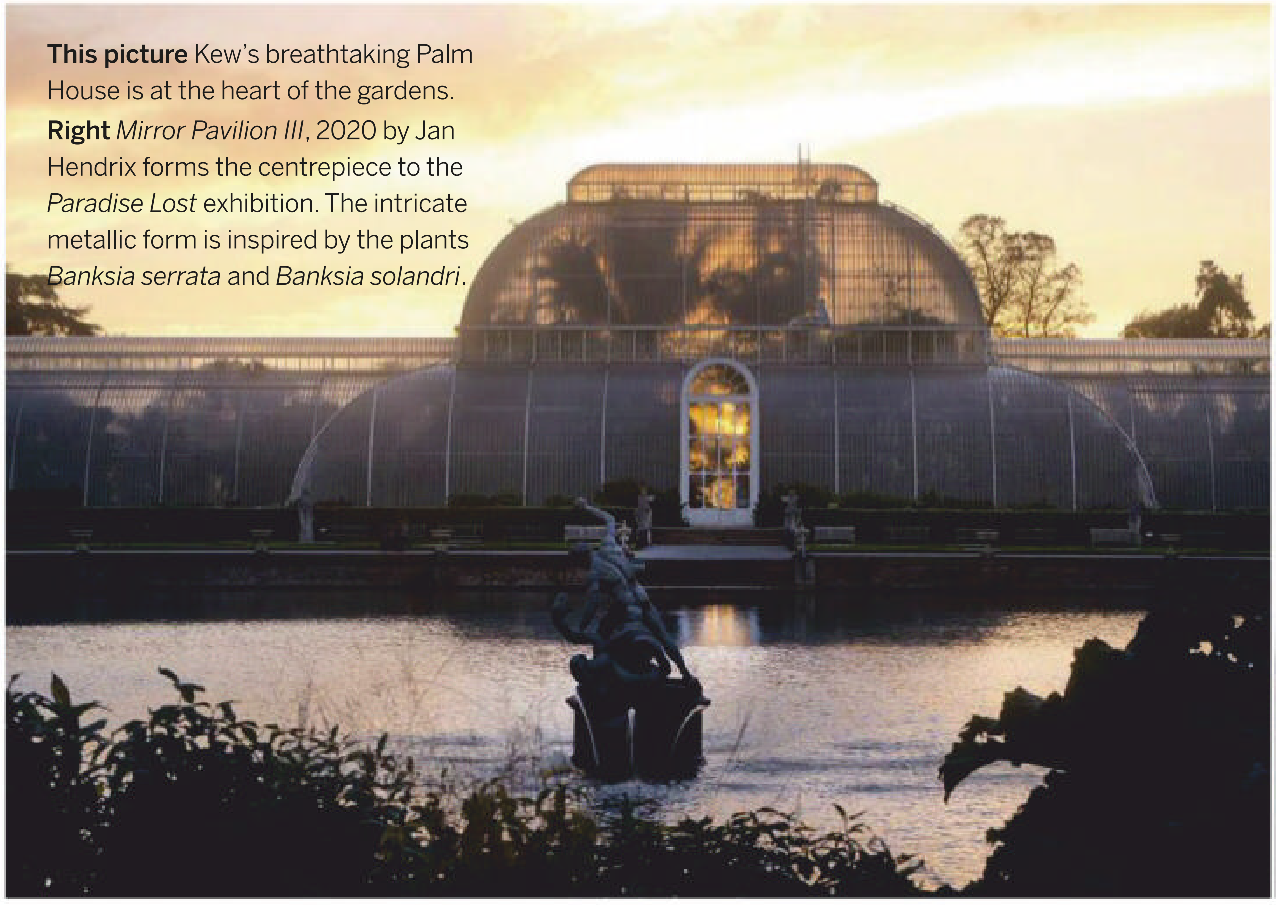

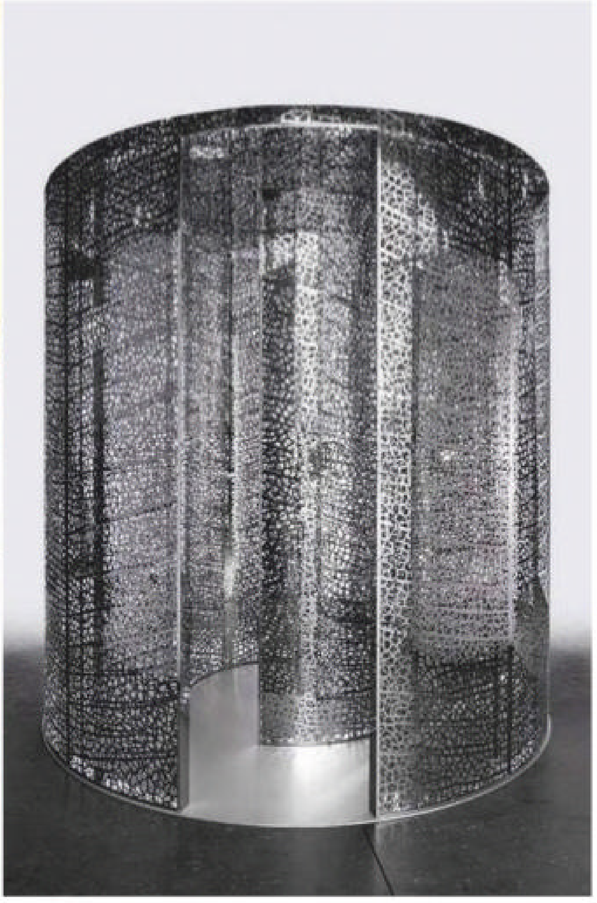

This picture Kew's breathtaking Palm House is at the heart of the gardens. **Right** *Mirror Pavilion III*, 2020 by Jan Hendrix forms the centrepiece to the *Paradise Lost* exhibition. The intricate metallic form is inspired by the plants *Banksia serrata* and *Banksia solandri*.

Win free entry for two to the world-famous Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

The gardens at Kew

As a designated Unesco World Heritage site, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, are home to over 50,000 living plants. In fact, Kew has one of the most diverse collections of living plants of any botanic garden in the world, encompassing plants from tropical, temperate, arid and alpine climates.

Enjoy discovering the gardens throughout the seasons with highlights whenever you visit. The Alpine House is a delight in spring with its tiny treasures, or the natural woodland areas aglow with naturalised bulbs. The Mediterranean Garden and King William's Temple come to life in summer, while the Grass Garden glows in the lowering light of autumn. Not to mention Kew's historic glasshouses, housing varied displays from around the world.

Exhibitions are held regularly in the gardens' various spaces and April sees the reopening of Kew Palace, Royal Kitchens and Queen Charlotte's Cottage, offering a delightful insight into the gardens' history.

Landmark exhibition

***Paradise Lost*, 4 April – 20 September 2020**

The first, UK, solo exhibition by Dutch-born, Mexico-based visual artist Jan Hendrix, *Paradise Lost* features new works in a number of media that convey the artist's response to the transformation of Sydney's Botany Bay.

Botany Bay was once beautiful and pristine, teaming with endemic flora and fauna – its name a response to the huge number of plants that were recorded and collected there in 1770 by European botanists sailing on the HMS *Endeavour* voyage to the South Pacific.

Paradise Lost will explore both the beauty and fragility of the natural world and its deterioration to make way for contemporary human existence. The historical material, collected by Sir Joseph Banks and his companions, is the starting point to Hendrix's collection of beautiful and thought-provoking art, with added poignancy given Australia's recent devastating fires.

Entry included in entry to the Gardens.

COMPETITION

We have five pairs of tickets to give away allowing free entry to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The tickets are valid until the end of the year, allowing you to plan exactly when you want to visit.

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Which other famous botanist was aboard HMS *Endeavour* along with Sir Joseph Banks when they sailed into Botany Bay in 1770.

a) Georg Ehret ☐
b) Carl Linnaeus ☐
c) Daniel Solander ☐

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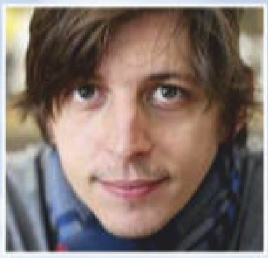
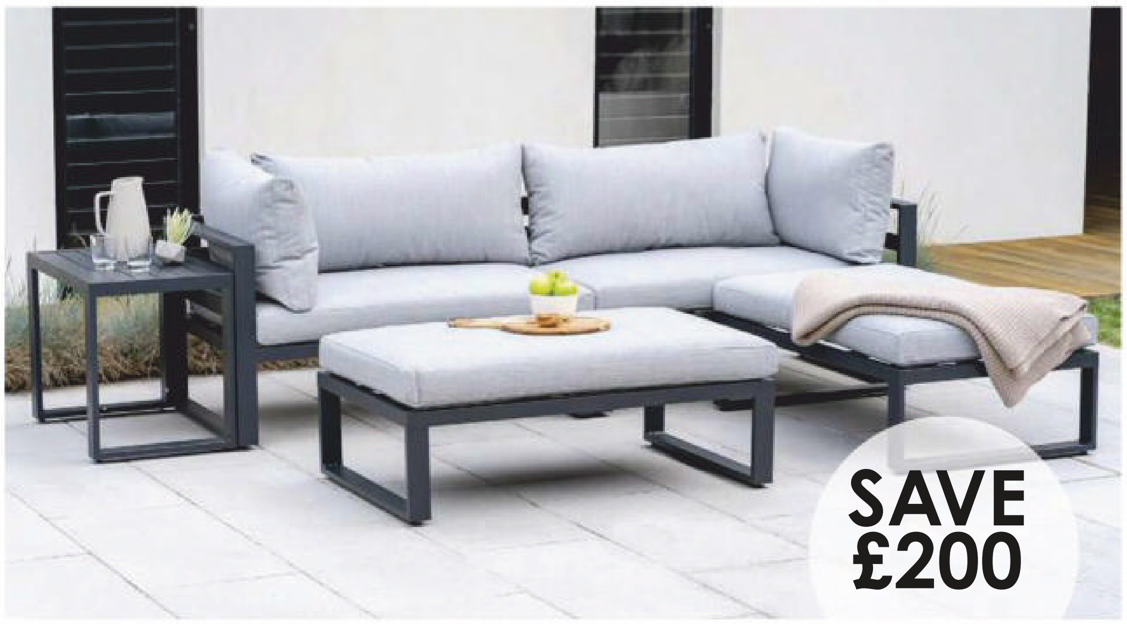
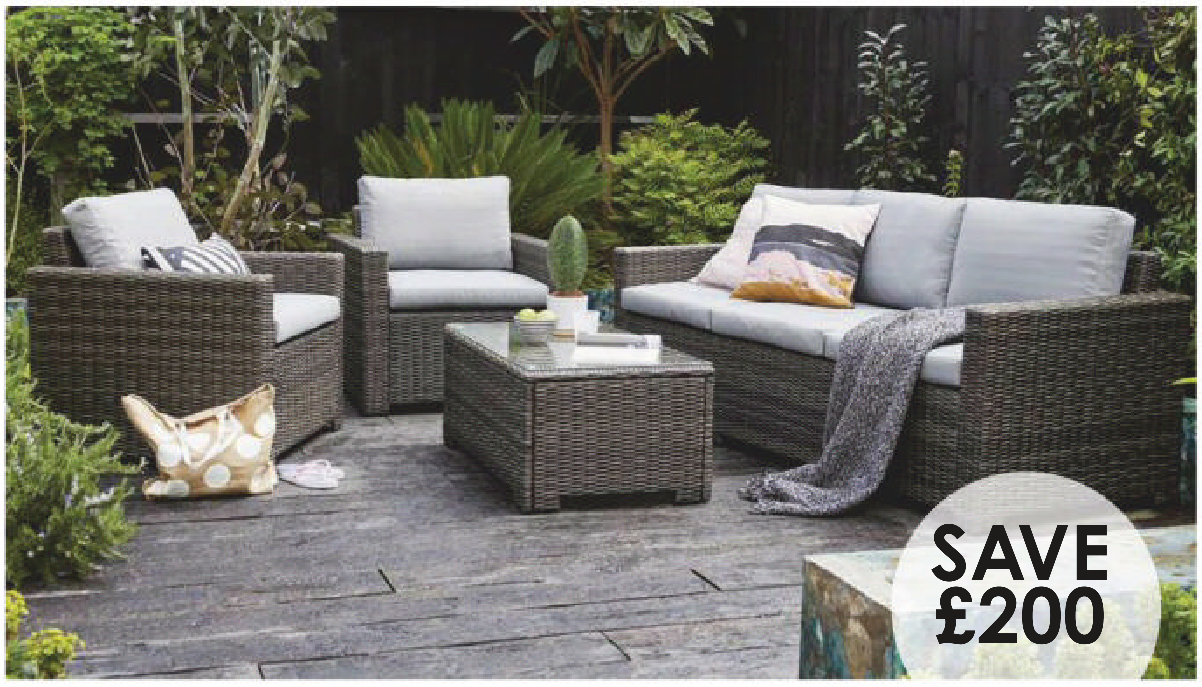


Santorini - Lounge Set with Cushions

This sleek modular looking lounge is truly versatile and can be arranged in several different ways. Consisting of one left hand and one right hand sofa, two ottomans and a compact coffee table, a simple re-arrangement of the pieces enables you to turn it into 2 chase longues, 2 day beds or keep all 4 pieces separate for a more sociable outdoor lounge space. Available in Grey and includes a 12 month warranty. Normally £699, it's now available at an amazing **£499***. To receive your £200 **discount quote code GDAPR20** at checkout.



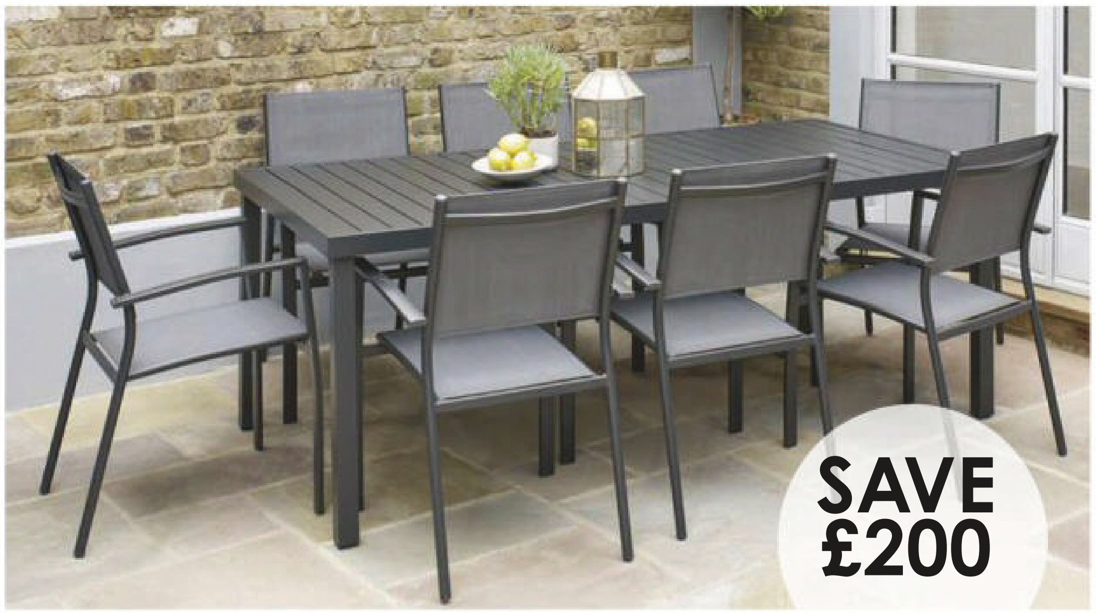


Murcia - 5 Seater Lounge Set

This chic garden lounge set is made from high quality artificial resin which makes it virtually maintenance free. Comfortable and stylish made easy, the Murcia includes a 3-seater sofa, 2 armchairs all with seat and back cushions and a coffee table finished off with a clear tempered glass top creating a functional centrepiece, perfect for drinks and snacks in the garden. Includes a 12 month warranty. Was £699, it's now **just £499*** for readers when you quote your £200 **discount code GDAPR20** at checkout.

Havana - Patio Dining Set

Make the most of your garden this year with the beautiful 8-seater Havana Garden Set. Comprising 8 stackable armchairs and matching 200cm rectangular dining table, the Havana is made almost entirely from aluminium so is lightweight and easy to move – yet incredibly strong. It is also maintenance free. With fabric seat and back rest, the chairs are extremely comfortable. Normally £699, the Havana is now available at an incredible **£499***. To receive your £200 **discount quote GDAPR20** at checkout.



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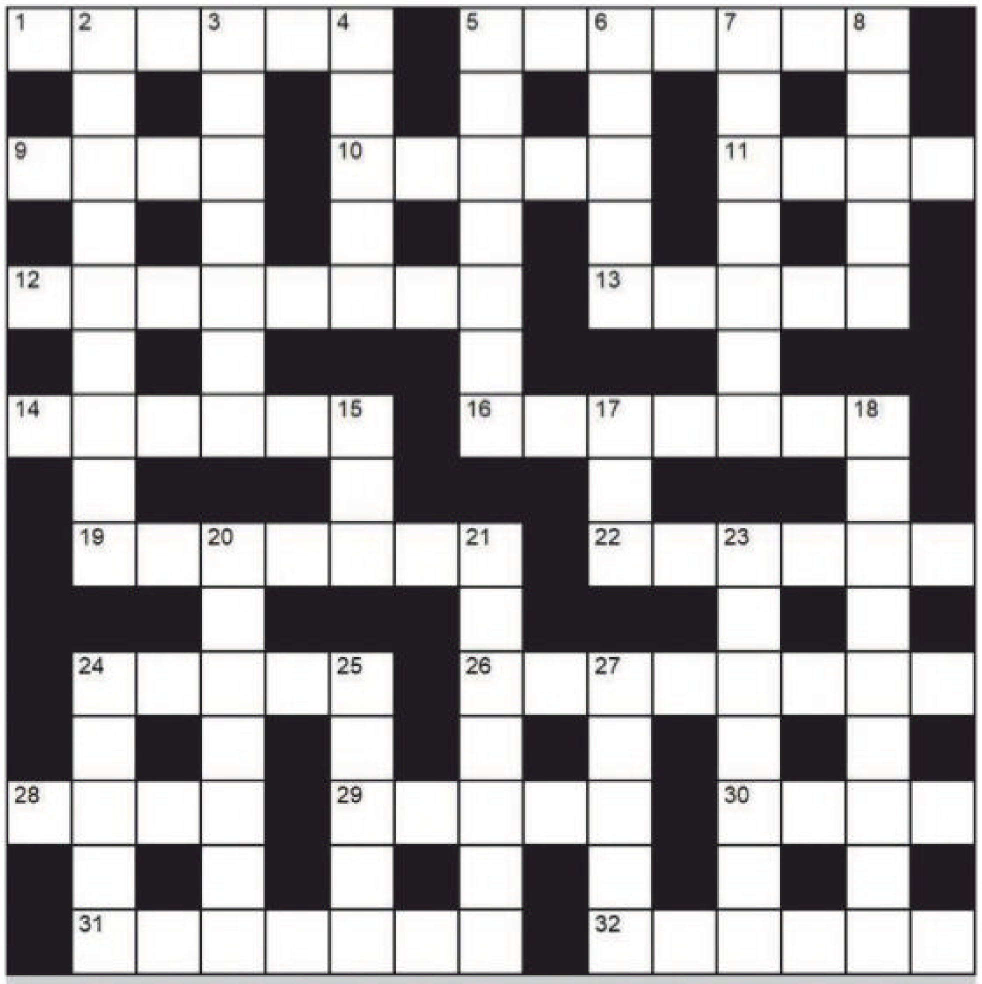

ACROSS

1 Pungent, spicy bulb of the onion genus (6)
5 Genus of plant commonly called broom (7)
9 Used by some gardeners to kill slugs (4)
10 Genus of bog arum – in Botanical Latin! (5)
11 Herb that's a money maker (4)
12 Architectural plant with sword-like leaves – for me, um, it's said! (8)
13/28 Worm proverbially caught by this series of dianthus plants? (5,4)
14 Genus of couch grass – in part, extremely muscular! (6)
16 Young tree (7)
19 Indicates… a term for patches of colour at base of iris falls (7)
22 Grows like creepers… or stalks (6)
24 Pure white tulip on sturdy stems – 'The Huntress'? (5)
26 Saffron is obtained from these corms (8)
28 See 13
29 Huge-headed, chocolate-centred sunflower – a toy I fancy! (5)
30 __ Linnaeus… ink-flowering stonecrop (4)
31 Genus of the honesty plant – in Laura's arrangement (7)
32 Mignonette genus in calabrese – darn! (6)

DOWN

2 Perennial with white everlasting flowers… has a plain alternative (9)
3 Purple loosestrife genus – h'm, truly different (7)
4 Eg puntias and parodias (5)
5 Sweet flag species – casual distribution around start of May (7)
6 Carefully separate out plant roots, kid! (5)
7 A *Hakonechloa* with variegated white/green leaves – 'Japanese Warrior' (7)
8 ___ soil has a gritty texture, is free-draining and low in nutrients (5)
15/25 Coastal wild Michaelmas daisy (3,5)
17 Container – for *Cannabis sativa*? (3)
18 Common name for *Solidago canadensis* (6,3)
20 A common name for *Iris foetidissima* – pleased Monty? (7)
21 Genus of devil's bit scabious – makes CIA cuss terribly! (7)
23 Genus of plant with fern-like leaves, aka 'Goatsbeard' (7)
24 A row of seeds is a boring thing! (5)
25 See 15
27 That of rafflesia is putrid (5)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

SOLUTIONS TO MARCH'S CROSSWORD

ACROSS 1/30 Arum lilies **4** Beaujolais **9** Ruby port **10** Gemini **11** Hebe **13** Hansa **14** Orca **15** Lathyrus **18** Silene **20/2** Moulin Rouge **22** Achillea **24** Balm **26** Midge **28** Cyme **31** Musk rose **33** Knot garden **34** Dock.

DOWN 3 May **4** Biochar **5** Aiton **6** Juglans **7** Limbo **8** Innocence **12** Ethel **16** Adoration **19** Lilac **21** Nemesia **23** Heels in **25** Moist **27** Domed **29** Music **32/17** Red Sea.

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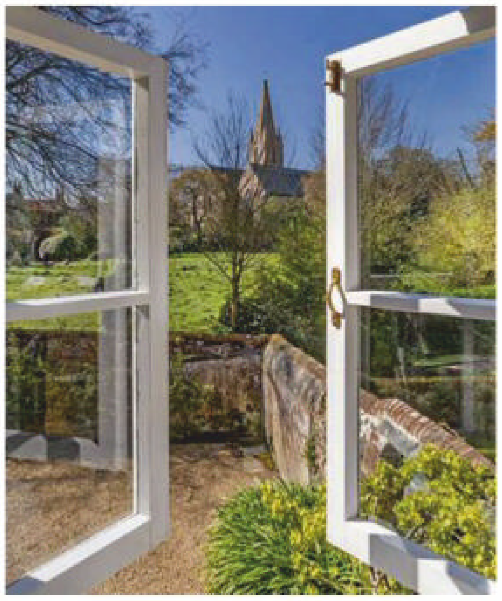

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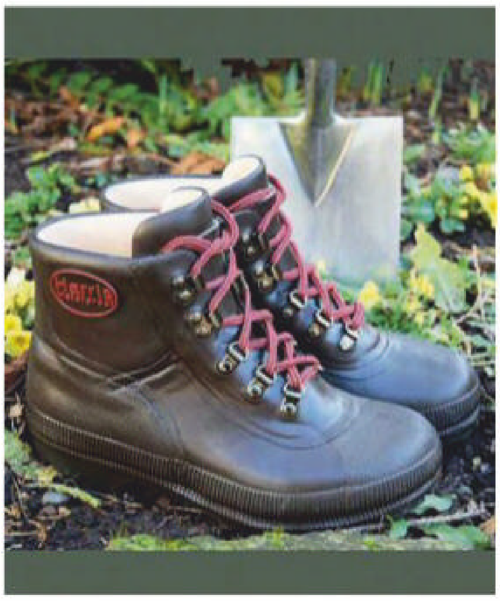

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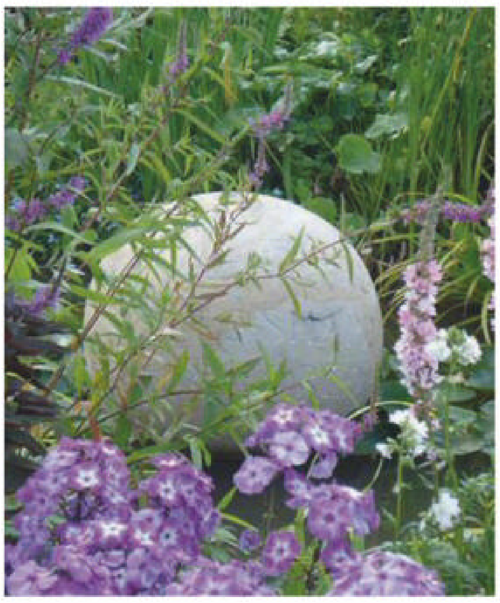

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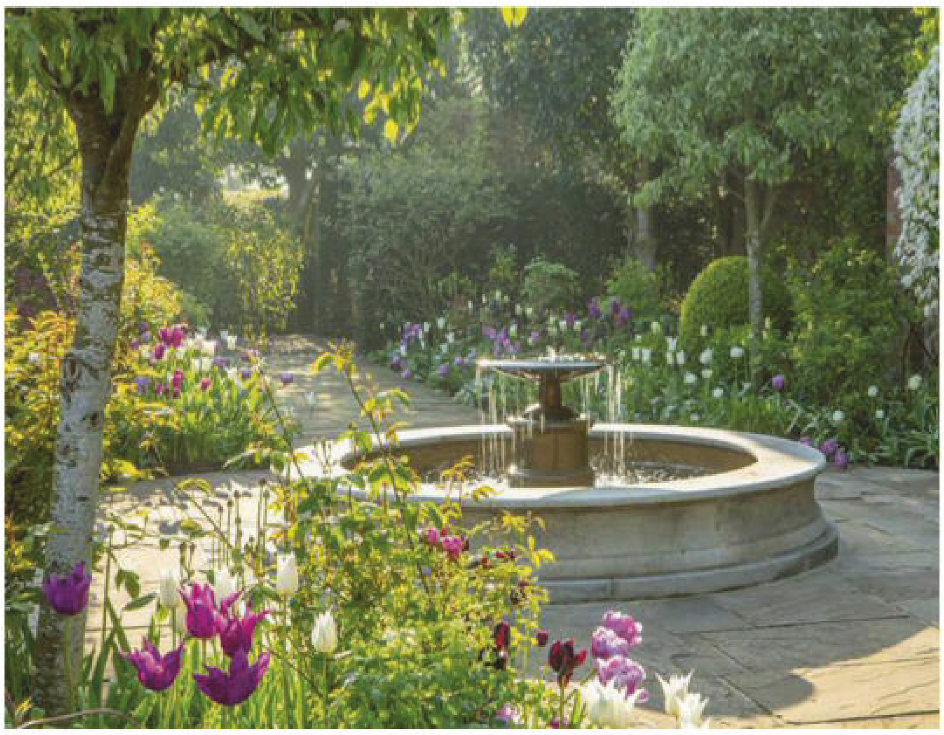

MORTON HALL GARDENS

WORCESTERSHIRE

Morton Hall Gardens Tulip Festival 2-4 May, in conjunction with the Royal Shakespeare Company and Bloms Bulbs. Be inspired by stunning tulips in borders, pots and cut flower displays, with expertise from Bloms Bulbs at hand. Stroll through peaceful woodland gardens with gentle spring displays or a meadow brimming with camassias and wildflowers. Enjoy delicious food in a marquee café. Tickets available at rsc.org.uk/morton-hall **mortonhallgardens.co.uk | 01386 791820.**

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SURREY

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dunsboroughpark.com | events@ dunsboroughpark.com

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20,000 Tulips planted in different colour combinations, underplanted with mysotis and Wallflowers. Inspirational planting of pots, and Rose Cottage Plants attending. The 15th-century Manor House will be open. Tea room and shop. 2-5pm Sunday 26 April, and every Wednesday and Thursday. Plant Fair Sunday 19 July. See website for details.

enquiries@cheniesmanorhouse.co.uk | 01494 762888

BLOOMING ARUNDEL CASTLE

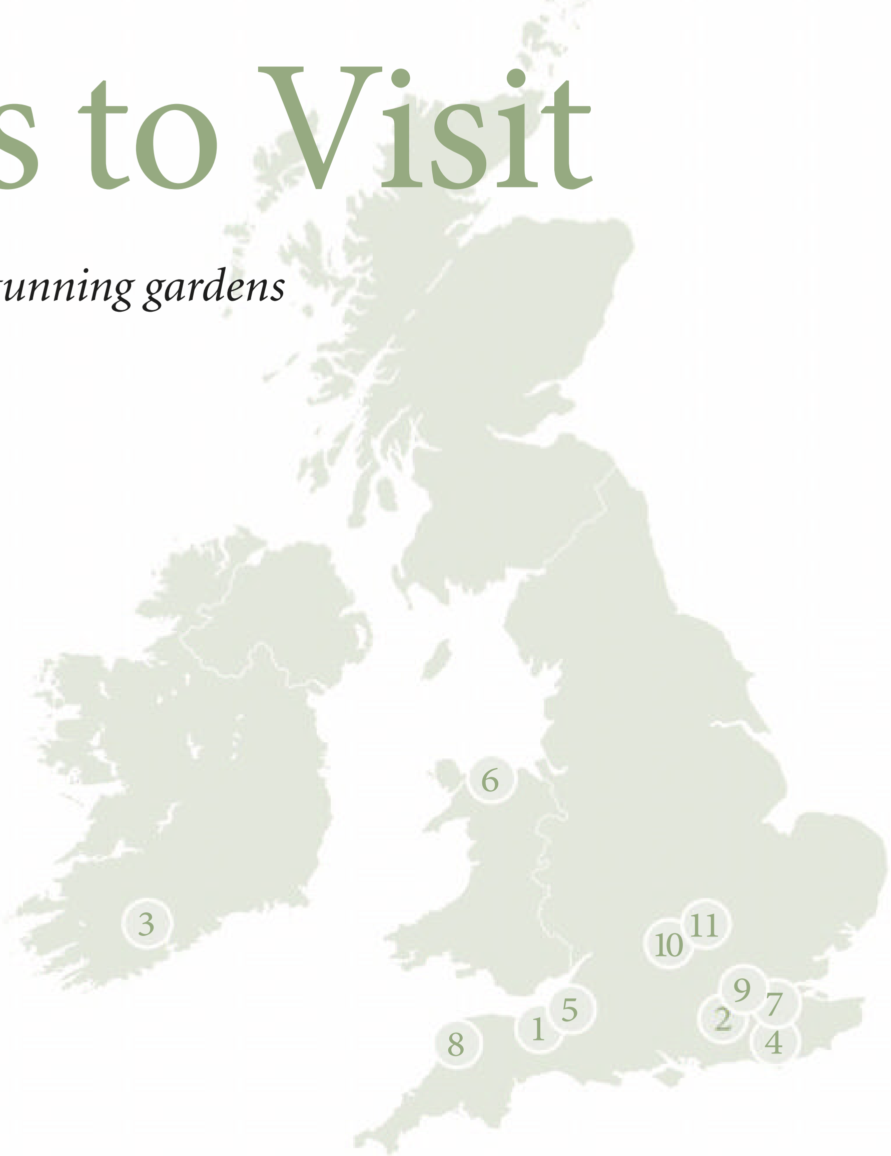
WEST SUSSEX

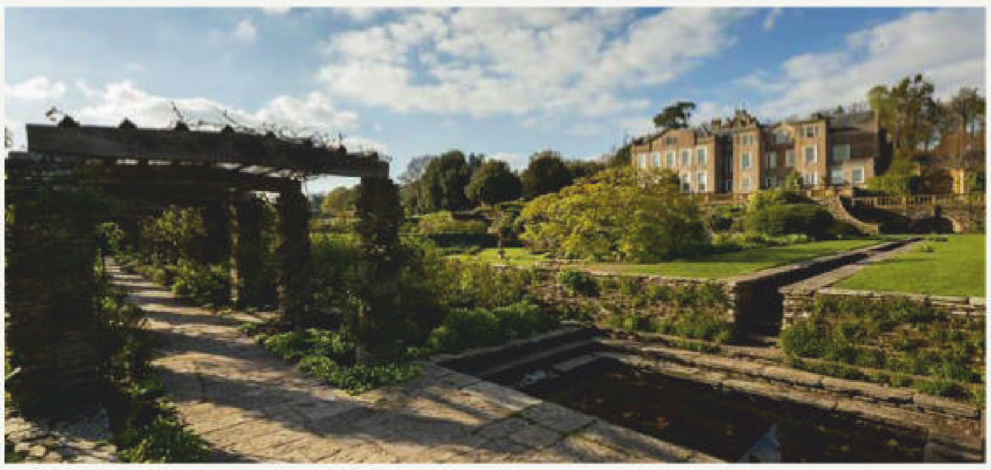
Now anticipating its sixth year, the festival at the ancestral home of the Duke of Norfolk is set to be bigger than ever. The spectacular display will feature more than 80,000 tulips in 120 varieties across the Castle's 40 acres throughout April. Arundel Castle and Gardens re-opens on 1 April 2020.

arundelcastle.org

Spring Gardens to Visit

As spring approaches, make time to visit this collection of stunning gardens





1 HESTERCOMBE GARDENS

It is during spring that Lutyens' magnificent hard landscaping is most visible in the Formal Gardens, which he designed with Gertrude Jekyll. In the Georgian Landscape Garden, designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde c.1750s, swathes of beautiful snowdrops, daffodils and later, bluebells, punctuate the neo-classical vistas.

Taunton, Somerset TA2 8LQ | 01823 413923 | hestercombe.com

2 RAMSTER GARDEN

Ramster is a stunning woodland garden of over 20 acres renowned for its captivating beauty and tranquillity. Explore the natural winding paths to see spring delights with endless carpets of bluebells and renowned collection of azaleas and rhododendrons, which burst into colour throughout the garden in May.

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3 BLARNEY CASTLE

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Near Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 3QS | 01323 844224 | sussexpast.co.uk

5 THE BISHOP'S PALACE & GARDENS, WELLS

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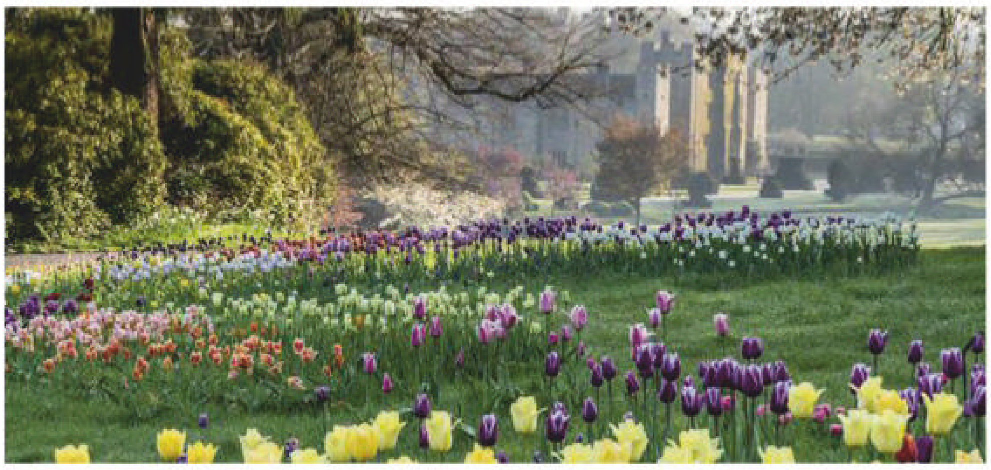
6 BODNANT GARDEN

Bodnant Garden's 80 acres span grand Italianate terraces, tranquil meadows and woods, and dramatic riverside dells. Visit this spring to enjoy camellias, magnolias, cherry blossom, rhododendrons and the famous Laburnum Arch, as featured in the Easter 2020 movie *The Secret Garden.*

Tal y Cafn, Colwyn Bay LL28 5RE | nationaltrust.org.uk/bodnant-garden



7 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Tulip Celebrations at Hever Castle & Gardens will see the gardeners lead visitors on daily tours of the Castle grounds which will be ablaze with tulips in every conceivable colour, from 21 26 April 2020. The Italian Garden will host the largest of the tulip planting displays with a kaleidoscope of colours.

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9 CHARTWELL

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Westerham, Kent TN16 1PS | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk/chartwell

10 BUSCOT PARK

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Faringdon, Oxfordshire SN7 8BU | info@buscot-park.com | buscotpark.com

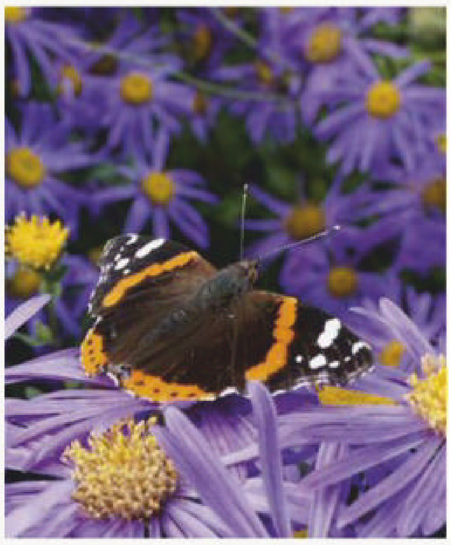
11 WATERPERRY GARDENS

Celebrate the first signs of spring with Snowdrop Season at Waterperry Gardens. With more than 60 different varieties carpeting the ornamental gardens. Open: 10am-5pm.

Waterperry, Oxfordshire OX33 1LA | 01844 339226 | waterperrygardens.co.uk

Spring Nursery Guide

Get inspired for the spring season with the best plant and bulb suppliers



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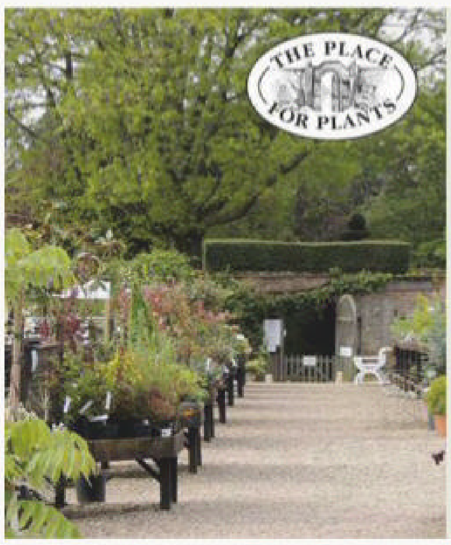

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quercusgardenplants.co.uk
quercusgardenplants@gmail.com

WOOTTENS OF WENHASTON

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woottensplants.com
01502 478258

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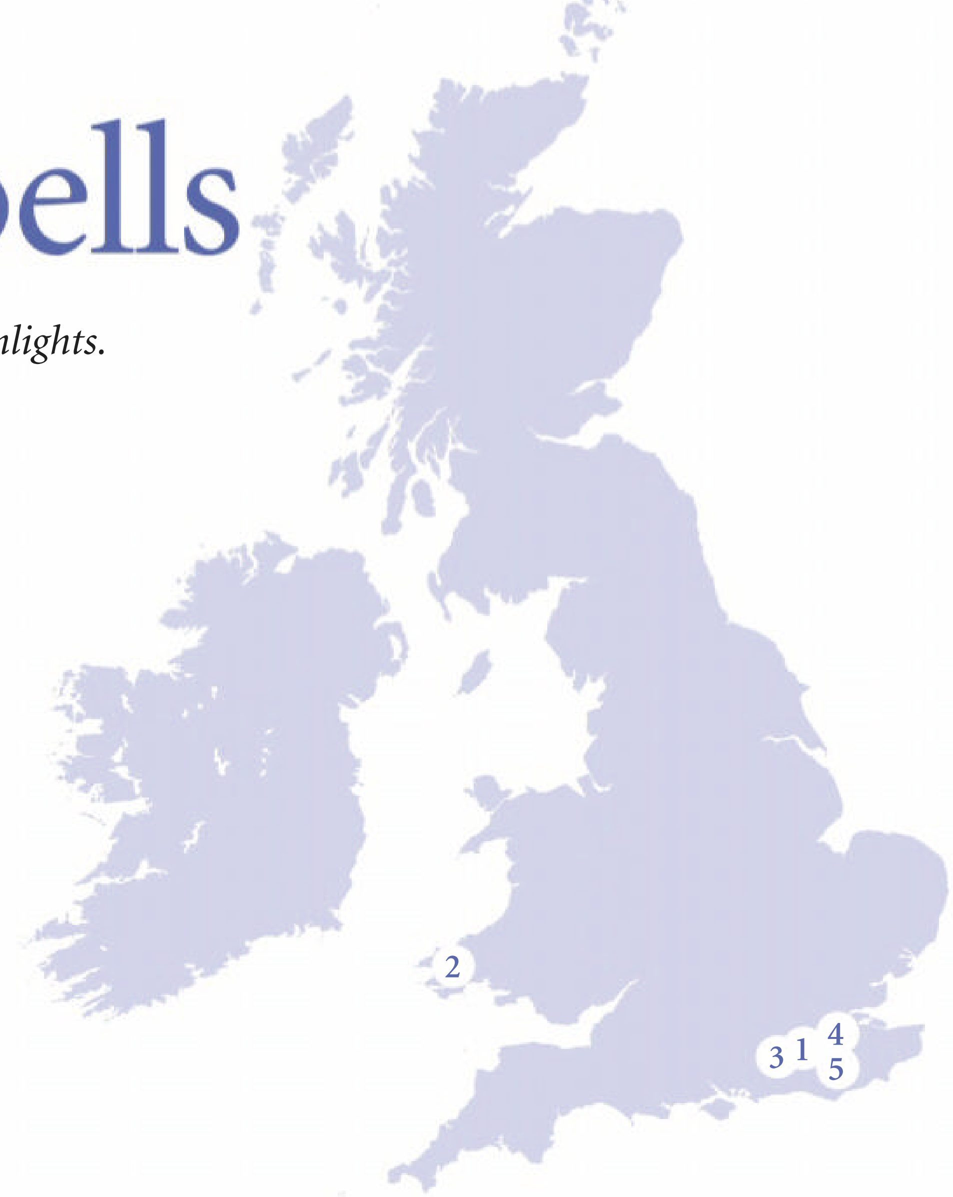
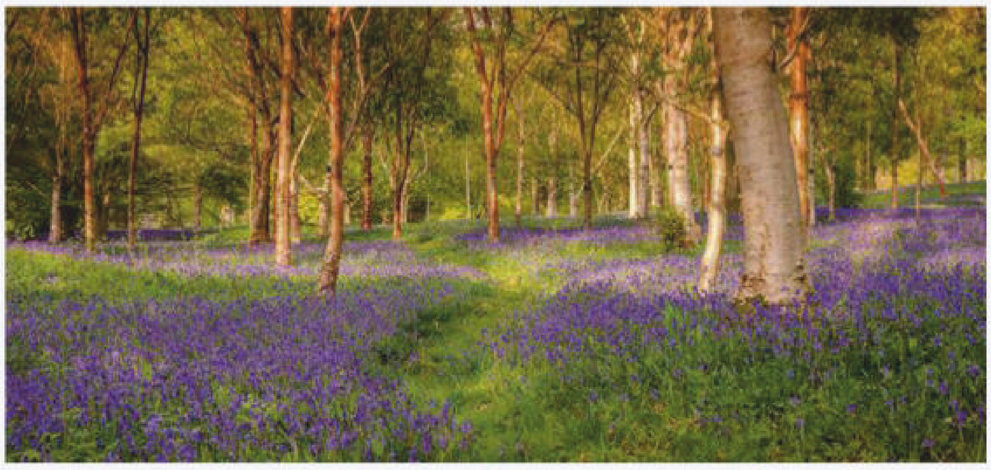
Beautiful Bluebells

Immerse yourself in bluebell woodlands, one of nature's spring highlights.





1 WAKEHURST

Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex, has over 500 acres of ornamental gardens, woodlands and a nature reserve. Don't miss the greatest wildflower display in Bethlehem Wood, as a sea of bluebells transform the woodlands into a stunning carpet of blue.

Haywards Heath, Sussex, RH17 6TN | 01444 894066 | kew.org/wakehurst

2 PICTON CASTLE & GARDENS

An enchanting 13th-century castle surrounded by 40 acres of spectacular gardens with an abundance of rare trees and plant collections from around the world. Magnificent rhododendrons, shady woodlands, an exotic jungle garden and a colourful walled garden complement this award-winning garden for all seasons.

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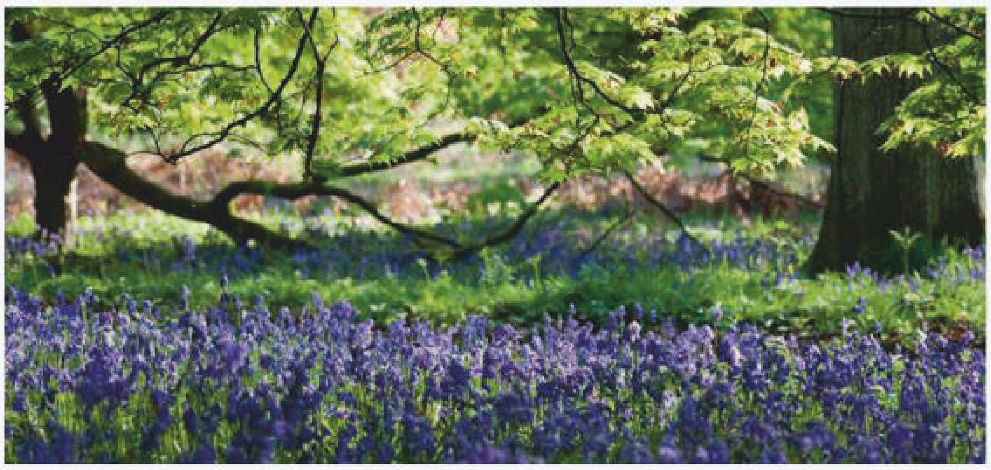

3 NATIONAL TRUST WINKWORTH ARBORETUM

Nestled in the heart of the Surrey, Winkworth Arboretum is home to stunning seasonal displays of beautiful bluebells. Wander along tree lined pathways down to the lake or head straight Bluebell Wood to see the most spectacular swathes of flowers.

Godalming, Surrey GU8 4AD | nationaltrust.org.uk/winkworth-arboretum

4 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Follow a woodland path in the grounds of Hever Castle, once the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, and enjoy fabulous bluebell displays and blankets of these delicate flowers in the woodland not usually open to visitors. See website for opening dates. Hever, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG.

hevercastle.co.uk | 01732 865224

5 HOLE PARK ESTATE

Hole Park is renowned as one of the very best places to see natural English bluebells during its Bluebell Spectacular from 15 April to 10 May. Visitors can check the bluebell barometer on the website to ensure they see these flowers at their best. Gardens open 28 March. 11am-6pm.

holepark.com | 01580 241344

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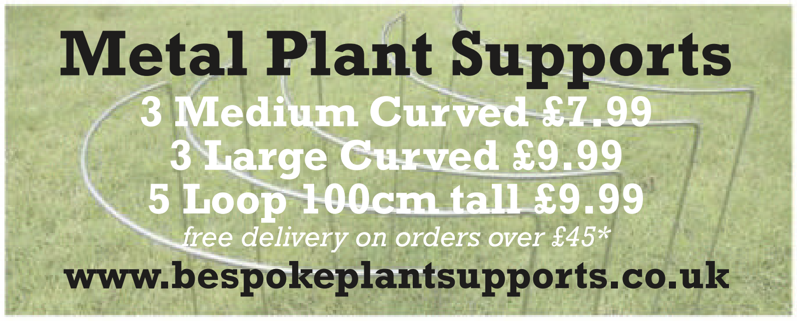

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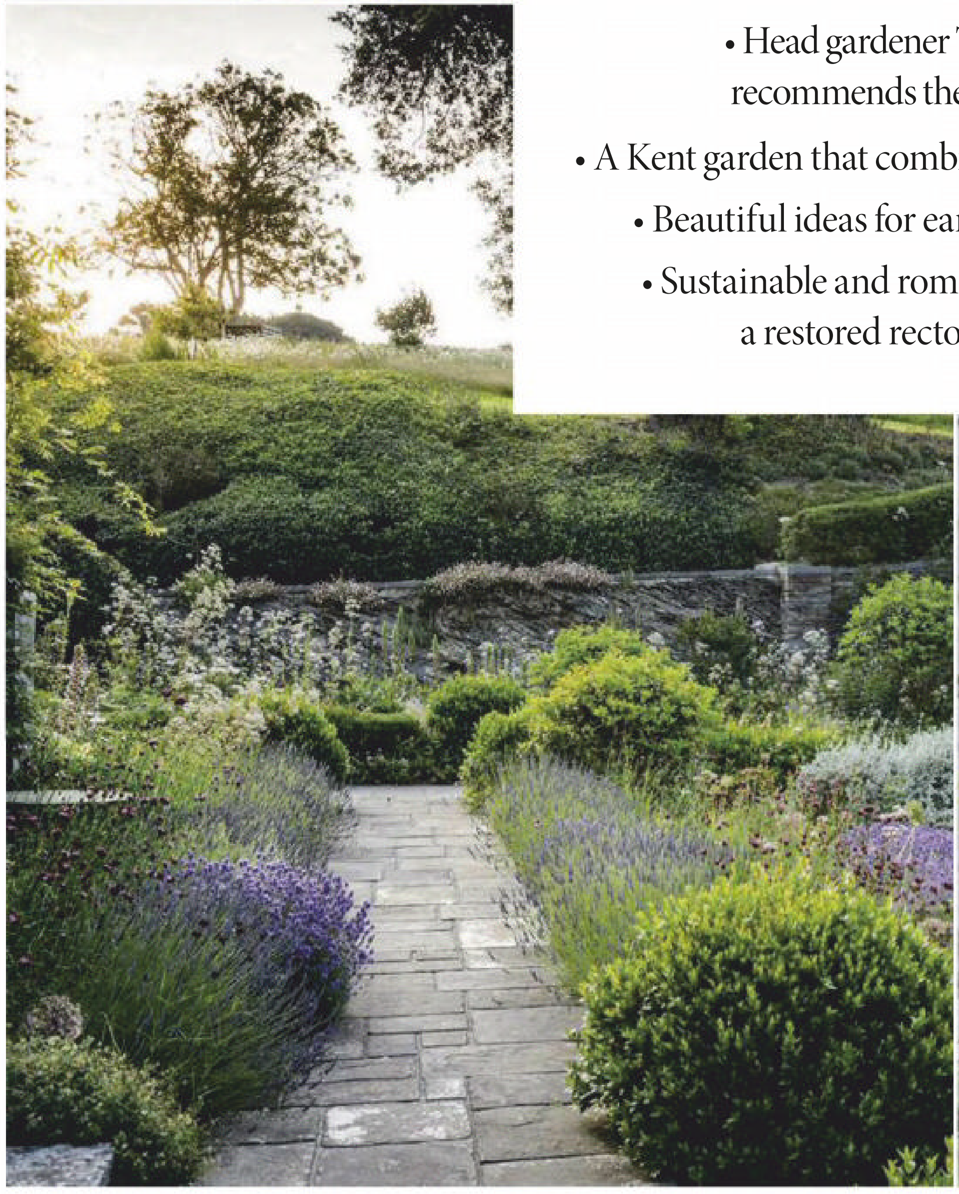

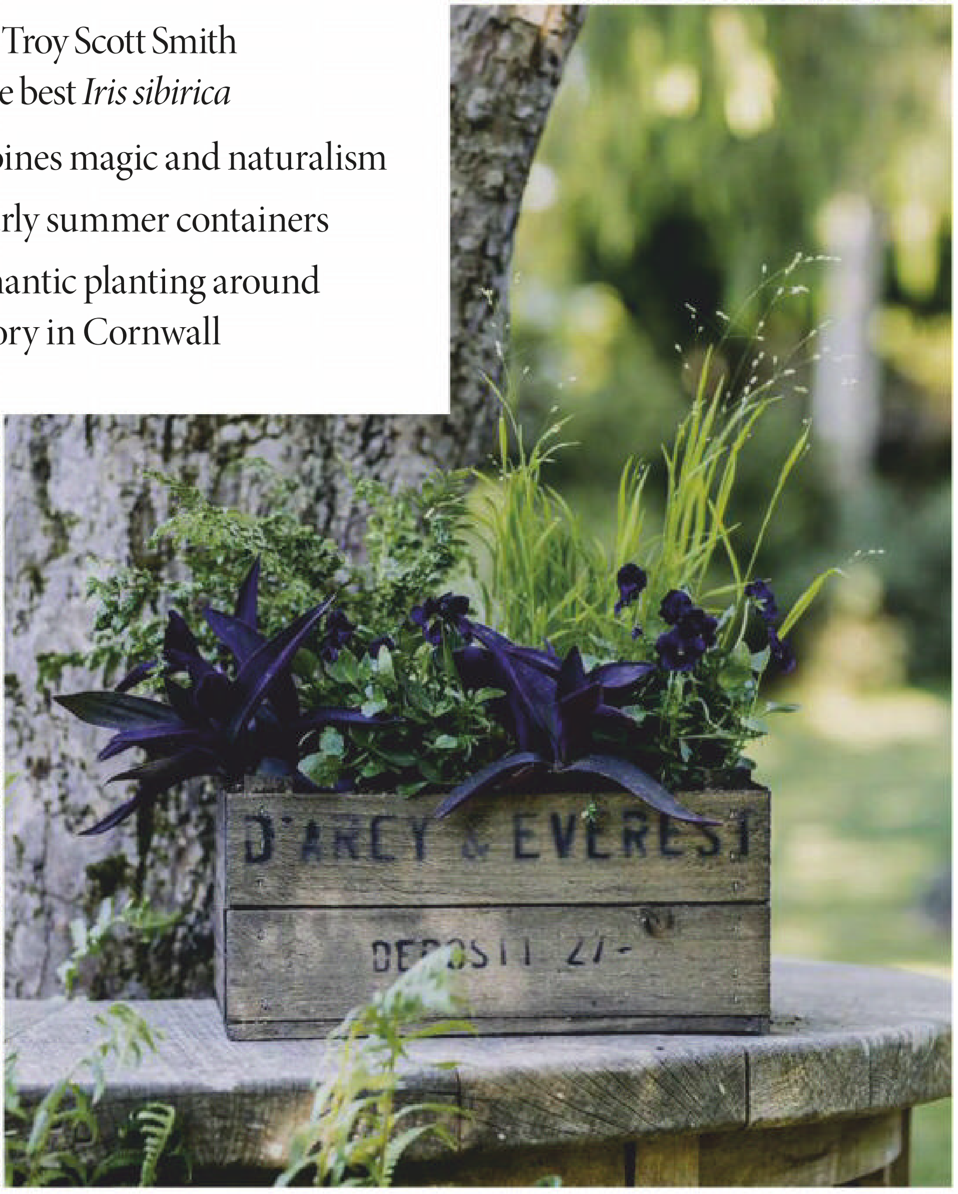
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HOUSEPLANTS

Hoya

The wax plant makes a comeback in myriad guises

WORDS JANE PERRONE ILLUSTRATION PATRICK MORGAN

For many, the first encounter with a *Hoya* ends in disappointment. It starts with falling in love with a single, fleshy, heart-shaped leaf standing upright and alone in a pot. Most buyers assume their leaf will eventually grow some friends: they are crestfallen to find that it remains alone forever – ironic for a plant often bought as a sweetheart's keepsake. The plant in question, *Hoya kerrii*, will only reproduce from cuttings that include a section of stem, so a single leaf won't die, but won't multiply either.

Hoyas were dismissed as 'your grandma's plants' for years and years, but that's doing them a disservice. In the past couple of years, they've undergone a huge revival. The range of species and hybrids available has expanded from the two stalwart specimens you'll find in every houseplant book: *H. carnosa* and *H. bella*.

Hoyas defy the usual (and, it has to be said, deeply artificial) categorisation of houseplants as either 'flowering' or 'foliage', but this genus offers the best of both worlds. One of the first things I bought when I got my own place was a variegated *H. carnosa*. I was captivated by its trailing stems clothed in glossy, green leaves edged in creamy white, but the half-globe clusters of furry, shell-pink flowers that followed were so weirdly compelling and beautiful that I wanted to adopt the Victorian tradition of using *Hoya* blooms as buttonholes.

H. carnosa has a mild scent, but some *Hoya* species pack a real punch when it comes to perfume, especially in the early evening. One of the most distinctive species is *H. linearis*, which has long, thin leaves like fuzzy green beans, and pure-white flowers with a buttery, lemony scent. It looks stunning trailing from a hanging basket, as the blooms are best viewed from below. And I am eagerly awaiting the flowering of my young plant of an as yet unidentified *Hoya* species, after hearing that its red and yellow flowers smell of sweet fudge.

Hoyas are tropical plants that hail from Asia, in particular China, India and Malaysia. Spotting them in the wild can be tricky, as most of the couple of hundred known species are epiphytic trailing vines that perch in trees and scramble through branches. Hoyas will happily trail from a shelf or windowsill, but you can get inventive growing them up circles of wire, mini obelisks or bent bamboo, held in place with ties or butterfly clips. Some can grow to an intimidating size given time, but if space is limited, *H. curtisii* is a miniature species with mottled, grey-green leaves and flowers in pink and lime green.

The key to growing good hoyas is emulating the fast drainage their roots experience when anchored in a cleft in a tree: in other words, soggy compost is the enemy. Allowing the growing medium to dry out between waterings helps, but the key is potting plants in a porous mix: I tend to use two parts peat-free Melcourt SylvaGrow to one part perlite and one part finely milled orchid bark, but every grower has their own recipe. Many hoyas will be happy with bright indirect light, but do some research if you buy a new plant, as their light requirements vary: *H. kerrii* needs lots of sunshine, whereas *H. linearis* likes partial shade.

So what's not to like about these plants? Perhaps their Achilles' heel is the propensity for the flowers to drip nectar; *H. kerrii,* with red nectar that stains soft furnishings, is one of the worst offenders. But I'm happy to put a sheet under the flowers to catch the drips. It's a price worth paying for these stunning plants.

Propagating hoyas

Stem cuttings are easy to strike from most *Hoya* species, provided you follow a few simple rules. Remove a stem from the plant and divide it into sections, cutting so that you end up with two leaf nodes (the point where the leaf joins the stem), one at either end of each section. Remove the lower leaves and place into a glass of water or pot of damp compost with added perlite, and cover with a clear plastic bag to raise humidity. Within weeks, cuttings should start rooting to make a new plant, and you can offer admirers a baby plant of their own to take home. □

Jane Perrone is a garden writer

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